

SCOTLAND'S STORY

47

**Scotland is hit
hardest as
recession bites**

**Quest for a
new image**

**Soup kitchens
and tight belts in
General Strike**

**Hugh MacDiarmid
- jag in the thistle**

**Scots discover
their land of
adventure**




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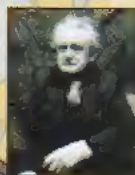
ATLANTIC
OCEAN



NORTH
SEA

1926

General Strike is called as industrial contraction results in sustained economic strife.



1928

Hugh MacDiarmid founds the National Party of Scotland.



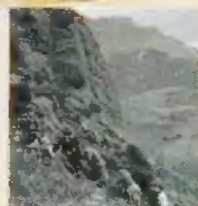
1929

Wall Street Crash plunges Scotland into deeper depression.



1930

Oswald Mosely symbolises a decade of sinister ideology.



1931

The Scottish Youth Hostels Association is formed.



1936

The German football team makes a point on Scottish soil.

1933

Technology extends its influence as the century gathers pace.



1938

War looms near as Chamberlain attempts to appease Hitler.



1946

Champion of Scottish women's writing, Violet Jacob, dies.

**In Part 48:
Scotland at War**

PART
OF
ENGLAND

PART OF
IRELAND

North
Channel



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COMMENT



COVER:
Francis Campbell Boileau Cadell's *Lady in Black* (1921) captures the elegant style of the 1920s. As depression hit the masses, the well-off could still enjoy the best fashions of the time.

Hope amidst the depression

After the human catastrophe of the Great War, there was hope that the future would be brighter for small nations such as Scotland. But that hope was dashed by 1920 when the nation's economy began to slide into a prolonged deep depression.

The integrated heavy industries which had served the country so well in the decades before the War became an economic noose around Scotland's neck.

While parts of England such as the Midlands diversified into more adaptable light industries, Scotland's industrial heartland of Clydeside creaked and groaned under the strain of commercial pressure from overseas.

The Empire no longer acted as a panacea in times of economic downturn and the colonial nations showed signs of becoming increasingly autonomous in their commercial activities in the 1920s and 30s.

Just as things seemed to be improving, the 1929 Wall Street Crash in the United States sent out a depressive shock-wave that engulfed Scotland. The economy was plunged into deeper crisis than ever before with some areas

experiencing 50 per cent unemployment and almost a quarter of the population dependent on poor relief by 1935.

In these circumstances thrived the politics of hate, as typified by John Cormack's Protestant Action in Edinburgh.

Sadly, when an economic saviour came, it was in the form of an arms race to fight another World War.

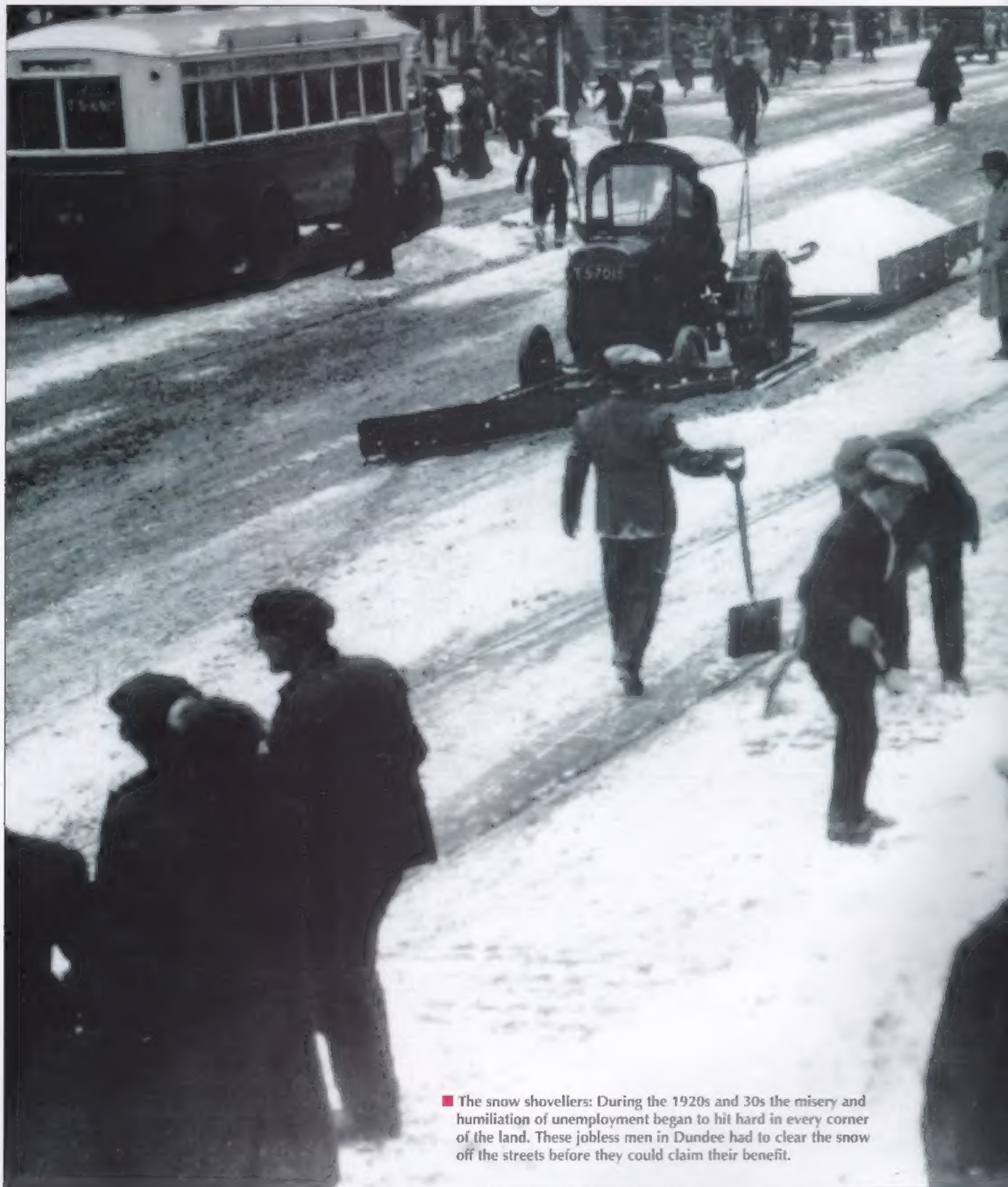
The 1920s and 30s, while a time of dreadful economic strife, were also years of great cultural achievement and renewal for Scotland.

The 'Scottish Renaissance' was a term coined by a leading French critic to describe the cultural nationalist movement that emerged in Scotland at the time.

Led by the brilliant but cantankerous Hugh MacDiarmid, it was a modernist movement which drew admirers from across Europe and the United States.

The searching cultural, social and political challenges the 'Scottish Renaissance' presented were greeted with acclaim, controversy and derision at the time – and many of them remain highly relevant today.

Impenetrable gloom



■ The snow shovellers: During the 1920s and 30s the misery and humiliation of unemployment began to hit hard in every corner of the land. These jobless men in Dundee had to clear the snow off the streets before they could claim their benefit.

as recession bites



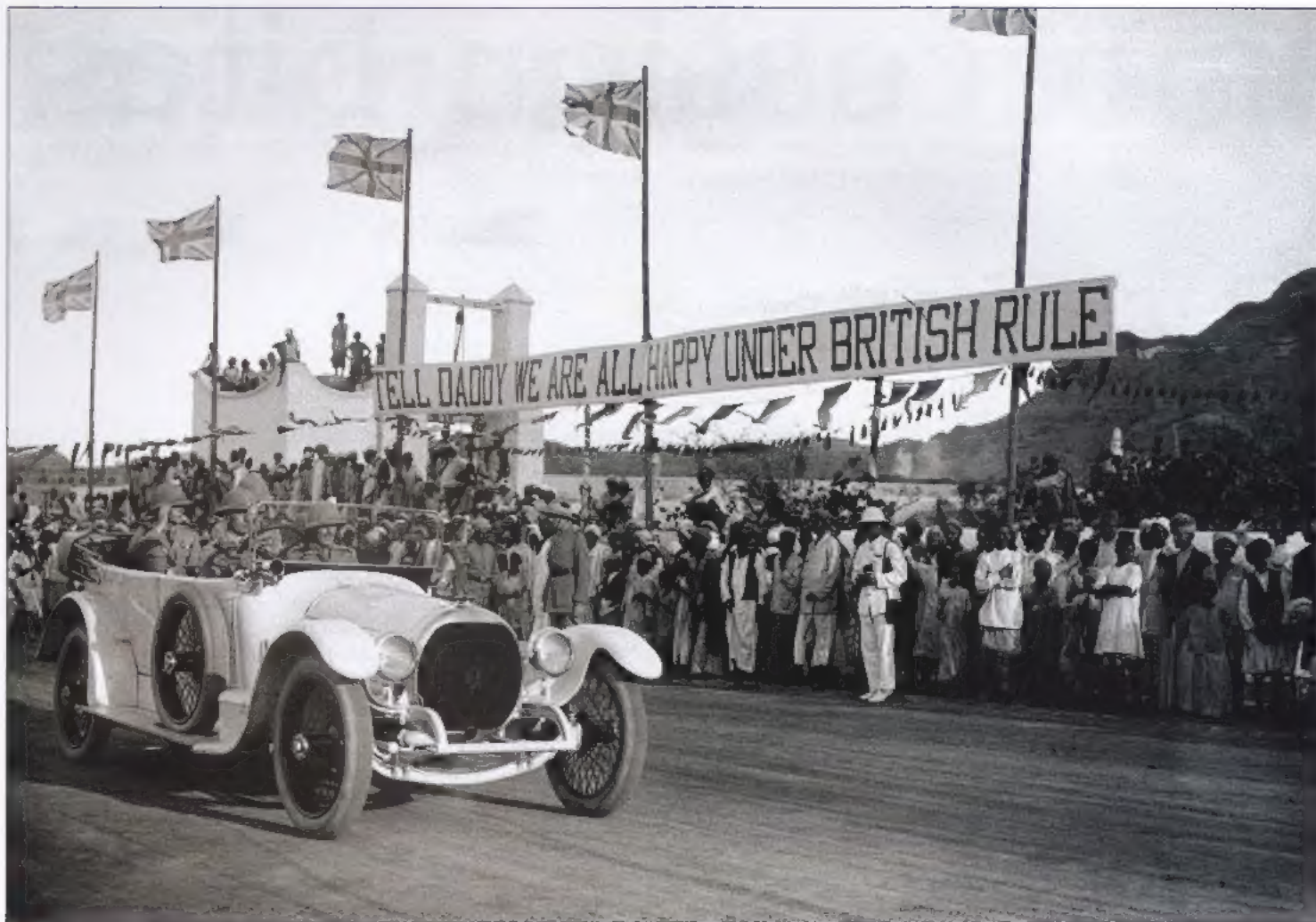
The optimism at the end of the Great War was short lived. The economy plunged into depression, dole queues lengthened, heavy industry collapsed and traditional markets dried up. Scotland was left to bear the brunt of the pain...

The period between the two world wars was one of unrelieved gloom for the economy and hardship for the people of Scotland. The optimism that followed the end of hostilities in 1918 quickly gave way to pessimism as from 1920 the Scottish economy dived headlong into depression, resulting in mass unemployment and poverty.

Unemployment was consistently higher in Scotland than in the United Kingdom as a whole, averaging around 14 per cent of the insured workforce in the 1920s and around 20 per cent in the 1930s. Of course, some areas were hit harder than others. The number out of work was higher in the west than in the east, although even in the latter part of the country there were industrial blackspots, such as Dundee with 37,000 people registered as unemployed in 1932.

During the peak of the depression – 1929–32 – the number of insured workers out of work increased from 12 to 25 per cent in Ayrshire, 10 to 50 per cent in Dunbartonshire, and in Lanarkshire the numbers more than doubled from 14 to 33 per cent.

The sections of Scottish society that bore a disproportionate share of the burden of unemployment were the young, especially school-leavers, and older workers. Skilled men also found ▶



■ The Prince of Wales visits Aden in 1921. The heavily staged reception indicates Britain's grip on its overseas Empire was increasingly brittle.

► themselves increasingly among the ranks of the unemployed as 42 per cent of shipbuilding workers were out of work in the period 1930-38.

Mass unemployment was a result of poor industrial performance. Output fell dramatically and many industrial concerns found themselves without orders. Plant and machinery lay idle with no prospect of any improvement.

From 650,000 tons launched in 1919, the output of Scottish yards fell to 74,000 tons in 1933, a figure lower than the 1850s. Coalmining witnessed a fall in production from a peak of 42.5 million tons in 1913 to an average of 30 million tons for the inter-war years, and in most industries the story was the same.

Indeed, all attempts in the period to revive the Scottish economy failed, and it was only as a result of the rearmament boom of the late 1930s that the economy picked up.

Although each industry has its own story to tell of collapse, the problems of shipbuilding – the jewel in Scotland's industrial crown – can serve to illustrate the wider difficulties faced by Scottish industry in this period.

The question is why in comparison to the rest of the United Kingdom did Scotland's economy suffer so badly in this period, and why did it fail to respond to the challenges and opportunities it faced? After all, areas of England, like the Midlands, with similar industrial structures to that of Scotland were able to diversify into new

Foreign competition, an over-priced pound, a leap in population, tariff barriers and the Wall Street crash all contributed to Scotland's woes

consumer and light engineering industries, such as cars, radios and other electrical goods.

The answer is mainly to be found in the structure of the Scottish economy. During the 19th century a highly-integrated industrial economy emerged based on shipbuilding, engineering, coal and iron and, later, steel.

These heavy industries supplied the world, but particularly the British Empire, with ships, railway engines, coal and other industrial products.

Because of this they were highly dependent on the state of world trade, which was volatile to say the least. Boom-and-bust cycles were experienced throughout the 19th century.

In many respects the economic difficulties of the period 1920-1939 were hardly new, however, there were significant differences to take into account.

Most economic depressions in the past were of a short duration, the inter-war depression lasted nearly 20 years and affected hundreds of thousands of Scots. In the 19th century emigration was the preferred answer to unemployment and, indeed, during the decade 1921-1931 Scotland lost 8 per cent of total population, or 400,000, compared to

4.5 per cent for Ireland, and only 0.5 per cent for England.

However, as a result of the Wall Street Crash of 1929 the depression had engulfed the USA, where things were even more severe, and many of the emigrants returned home. Combined with the unprecedented rise in the Scottish population in this period, it only added to the pressures in the job market.

Another problem Scottish industry faced was that traditional markets began to dry up. An over-priced pound and the erection of tariff barriers throughout Europe and even in the Empire made it difficult for Scottish businesses to sell their goods abroad.

Foreign competition was also becoming acute. With generous subsidies from the state, former consumers were becoming producers in their own right. Shipbuilding industries were emerging in the Far East and in European countries such as Sweden. World leadership was being lost over a range of goods. Dundee saw its dominance of the world jute trade collapse as India assumed leadership in the inter-war years. Once markets



■ No where to go, no work in sight – the grim reality of mass unemployment in Edinburgh in the 1930s.

were lost they were rarely recovered. In spite of the fact that Britain left the gold standard in the early 1930s, Scottish goods were still overpriced in comparison to other countries. The export trade on which so much of Scottish industry depended was still stagnant. The volume of exports in 1937 was only 67 per cent of what it had been in 1913.

A solution might have been to tap into the growing home market for consumer goods. However, the boom that was experienced in the south of England in the 1930s as a result of low interest rates and rising real wages bypassed Scotland.

The contraction of basic industries led to a slow growth in income, which grew by only one-fifth between 1924-37 – a rate much lower than the

UK as a whole. This was not simply due to higher unemployment, although nearly one in four of the population was dependent on poor relief in 1935. Scotland had far fewer salaried workers than England, and wage levels were historically lower.

As a result, demand for radios, cars and other new electrical products was marginal in Scotland. Even business leaders looked to the staple industries to take the economy out of recession.

The government's response to the economic situation was limited. In 1934 Special Areas legislation was introduced to provide a variety of financial and other inducements for firms to relocate from areas of low unemployment to areas of high unemployment.

Other innovations included the establishment of industrial estates, such as Hillington in Glasgow. However, such developments in regional policy only led to the creation of 50,000 jobs in the whole of the United Kingdom, while in 1938 there were still 1.8 million people out of work. Firms were reluctant to move to areas of low demand and high unemployment. Their refusal simply intensified Scotland's reliance on traditional industries.

The rearmament boom of the late 1930s and the war itself put Scots back to work and restored industry to profit once more. But as the post-Second World War decades would show, this was a false dawn.

Once war demand and the restocking boom had ended the problems of Scottish industry so visible in the 1920s and 30s would return – only this time there would be no lifeline.

The delayed transition from old heavy industry to the more dynamic service and consumer-based industries would be all the more painful. ●



■ Sweetie shop, Glasgow, 1933, with customers.

TIMELINE

1918

The Education Act gives Catholic schools state recognition.

1920

Poor industrial performance causes Scotland to dive headlong into depression.

1923

Church of Scotland pamphlet, *The Menace of the Irish Race to Our Scottish Nationality*, issued.

1926

Millions of workers take-on bosses and the government in the General Strike.

1928

Hugh MacDiarmid is principle founder of the National Party of Scotland.

1929

The Wall Street Crash in the USA sends out new wave of economic depression that engulfs Scotland.

1930

Scottish National Development Council is established in a bid to foster economic reconstruction.

1931

Young urban Scots visit the countryside with new Scottish Youth Hostels Association.

1932

Lewis Grassie Gibbon publishes the first part of his trilogy, *A Scots Quair*.

1933

Germany elects Adolf Hitler as Chancellor. A year later, Britain commences re-armament.

1935

Around a quarter of the Scots population is dependent on poor relief.

1937

Scottish export trade is two thirds what it was before the First World War.

General Strike fails as TUC surrenders

Revolution was feared as worker masses took to the streets in support of the miners. But union leadership had no heart for a power struggle

The 'Greatest Response in History' was how The Scottish Worker, the strike newspaper of the General Council of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), described the first week of the General Strike that began at midnight on Monday, May 3, 1926.

Called by the British Trades Union Congress (BTUC), which through its affiliated unions organised, led and controlled it, the Strike had been preceded on May 1 by the lock-out of the miners for resisting the coal owners' proposed cuts in their wages.

The millions of workers who took part, did indeed make a remarkable response to the call to strike in support of the miners – mindful of the words said to have been uttered before Red Friday, July 31, the previous year by Stanley Baldwin, the Conservative Prime Minister, that: "All the workers in this country have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry on its feet."

Some of the most militant trade unionists and left-wing activists hoped the General Strike would develop into a revolution, the outcome of which would be the overthrow of capitalism. But the mass of trade unionists who struck work or otherwise supported it saw the General Strike as a demonstration of working class solidarity in support of the miners.

The miners' slogan 'Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day' expressed also the conviction of millions of other workers. That was why, at the special conference of



■ A food convoy makes its way through the crowds as millions of workers stand firm in the General Strike of 1926.

national trade union executive committees called by the BTUC in London between April 29 and May 1, the vote in favour of sympathetic strike action was an overwhelming one of 3,653,527 to 49,911.

But significantly, the BTUC General Council insisted on describing it not as a General Strike but as 'co-ordinated action'.

As events in May were to show, the principal BTUC General Council leaders did not want a General Strike. They did everything they could, even after the overwhelming vote by the special conference in favour of it, first to reach an 11th hour settlement with the government that at the least implied acceptance of some reductions in the miners' wages, and then, having failed in that aim, sought to call the General Strike off as soon as they found a pretext for doing so.

In Scotland the BTUC General Council's policy and instructions

concerning the Strike were by and large faithfully carried out on its behalf by the General Council of the STUC. Although an autonomous body, the STUC also had its General Council in 1926 dominated by moderate leaders.

So reluctant was the BTUC General Council to become involved in a major industrial struggle (which the government claimed was really a major political or constitutional struggle) over the crisis in the coal industry in 1926, it failed or refused to make any preparations until a couple of days before the Strike began. Such preparations, it claimed, would be seen as 'provocative'.

It also argued that the Samuel Royal Commission of inquiry into the coal industry, set up by the government after Red Friday in July, 1925, when union solidarity had prevented a similar attack on miners' wages, should first report and have its report carefully considered

before trade unionists decided their next steps.

For those with eyes to see, the Samuel Commission appeared certain not to report in favour of what the miners and many other trade unionists for years past had urged as the only solution to the problems of the coal industry – nationalisation. The Commission was also likely to recommend reductions in miners' wages. The latter was precisely what, among other things, it did recommend when it reported in March, 1926.

The STUC General Council had ventured on February 8 to ask its British counterpart what its policy was toward the maintenance of essential services in the event of a big industrial dispute. The reply from the BTUC was that it was "not in a position to make a declaration of policy on the subject at the moment."

Many years later, Joseph F Duncan, one of the most influential

The miners in the end suffered most - pay reduced, longer hours, protection from victimisation gone

leaders of the STUC during the General Strike, when asked why the STUC itself had made no preparations for the Strike, said: "Until a strike was decided on by the TUC we did not know what to do."

Without any lead at national level, local trade union branches and trades councils - apart from those where militant or left-wing influence was strong and which set up Councils of Action - did little to prepare for a major struggle until, at the earliest, a couple of days before the Strike began.

Not so the government. By November, 1925, it had virtually completed its basic preparations for maintaining essential services in the event of a major stoppage. Its own emergency organisation in Scotland was put under the direction of the Lord Advocate.

An ostensibly independent body, the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS), formed under government influence in autumn, 1925, set about recruiting voluntary workers, though its success in Scotland was meagre before the strike began.

Once it began on May 4, volunteers (or blacklegs, as trade unionists called them) poured in to drive lorries, some trains, tramcars and buses, or to work at docks or electricity stations, or serve as special constables.

Many of these volunteers were students from the four Scottish universities. There were even some younger ones, and some teachers, recruited from private or fee-paying schools such as Fettes, Glasgow Academy, and George Heriot's.

The BTUC's plan, drawn up by Ernest Bevin only a couple of days before the General Strike began, and perhaps influenced by military parlance of the Great War, was to call out trade unionists in two 'lines'.

The first consisted of transport workers - mainly railwaymen, road transport men, and dockers (the seamen's union was one of only three that declined support) - printers, iron and steel producers and chemical workers, all building workers except those employed on housing and hospital work, and electricity and gas workers.

The second line (not called out until what proved to be the last day of the General Strike), was

composed mainly of predominantly Clydeside engineering and shipbuilding workers and those building workers not already in the first line. Many, including farm and textile workers, were never called out on strike - so some questioned whether it really was a General Strike.

The absence of the second line from the struggle helps explain why Glasgow and Clydeside did not play such an active part in the General Strike as they had, for example, in the 40 hours' strike in 1919. It is arguable that in holding these workers 'in reserve' the BTUC General Council leaders were trying to avoid deploying forces in the west of Scotland (as well as in other similar centres elsewhere in Britain) that were or might prove industrially and politically more radical.

Perhaps that was what J.H. Thomas

bus workers and unionised printers the response was also solid. But as the strike continued the number of trams in Glasgow, for example, increased. By its end, about half the normal service was running.

This was due to the intervention of volunteers or blacklegs, and to the return to work of some non-union tramwaymen.

In Aberdeen a threat by the Town Council to dismiss striking tramwaymen and thus annul their right to superannuation resulted in the return of some of the men.

Unionised printers responded solidly on May 4, although in some of the local weekly papers publication continued with the help of non-union men.

The Scotsman, non-union since 1872, continued normal publication and its strong support for the

Airdrie and Coatbridge, Methil, Falkirk, Elgin and Dumfries.

The Edinburgh bulletin was evidently the only one published from the first day of the strike, and altogether 65,000 copies of it were issued. The Paisley bulletin included a series of well-drawn cartoons, as well as apt quips such as:

'Let heat, light, food and fuel fail, But spare, O Spare, the Daily Mail'

The four-page printed Scottish Worker was not issued by the Scottish TUC until the third last day of the Strike.

There was violence between strikers or their supporters and police. Most took place over the running of buses, trams and trains, or the holding up by pickets of lorries or other road transport. There was a notable conflict at Ruby Street depot in Glasgow when 500 Cambuslang miners marched in to oppose 'volunteers' running tramcars. And a local fracas between pickets and police resulted in the formation at Methil of a well organised 800-strong Workers Defence Corps - unique in Britain in its size.

Apart from considerable numbers of tramwaymen in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, Paisley and Johnstone, a few printers, railway clerks, and others here and there, there is no evidence of any substantial return to work by strikers in Scotland before the General Strike was abruptly and unexpectedly called off by the BTUC on May 12.

So desperate were the BTUC leaders to call off the strike that they pretended the Memorandum submitted by Sir Herbert Samuel, despite his specific statement to the contrary, had also been accepted by the government as a basis for resuming negotiations.

The TUC surrendered unconditionally to the government, leaving the miners locked out and struggling on for a further six months until forced to surrender to further reductions in their wages, as well as an increase in their working hours, and leaving unprotected against victimisation by their employers all those trade unionists called out on strike in support of the miners.

Despite the debacle for which the principal TUC leaders, including J.H. Thomas and Arthur Pugh were responsible, most workers who took part looked back on the nine days with pride.

The Edinburgh Labour Standard newspaper declared: "To those of us who took part in it, however small that part may have been, the memory still lives - a memory of unselfish devotion, of unflinching courage, of unlimited faith in the power of the workers." ●



■ The headlines of 1926: in the end the miners suffered most.

had in mind when - after he and his fellow BTUC leaders had called off the General Strike so abruptly and unexpectedly - he said: "What I dreaded about this strike more than anything else was this: if by any chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man knows what would have happened."

In Scotland, the response to the call by the BTUC through the unions affiliated to it was solid. Few trains ran. The LMS, one of the two railway companies then covering Scotland (the other was the LNER), admitted that on the first day of the strike passenger services were 3.8 per cent of normal, and goods 1.9 per cent.

Even on the last day of the strike, passenger services were still only 12 per cent of normal, goods 3 per cent. Some 85 per cent of the LMS's engine drivers, firemen, guards, signalmen and shunters - and even 41 per cent of its clerical staff, who had never been on strike before - came out.

Among municipal tramway and

government helps explain one distinctive feature of the strike in Scotland - the absence of the government's strike newspaper The British Gazette, edited by Winston Churchill.

In Glasgow the main newspapers were unable to appear but combined to issue a daily titled Emergency Press, also strongly supportive of the government. In Aberdeen the Press and Journal and Evening Express were able to appear only as duplicated sheets.

The strikers, organised and directed at local level by strike committees, formed from trades councils and union branches and working sometimes under conflicting directions from the BTUC, STUC or their own national unions, sought to inform, keep up morale, and counter claims made in the anti-strike press, by issuing their own duplicated strike bulletins in almost a score of towns and districts, including Edinburgh, Paisley, Aberdeen, Greenock, Dunfermline,

MacDiarmid: jag in

Cantankerous he may have been, the oblique view he took often, but no one can fail to admire his work, his passion for Scotland and his feeling for the rich Scots words now vanishing fast

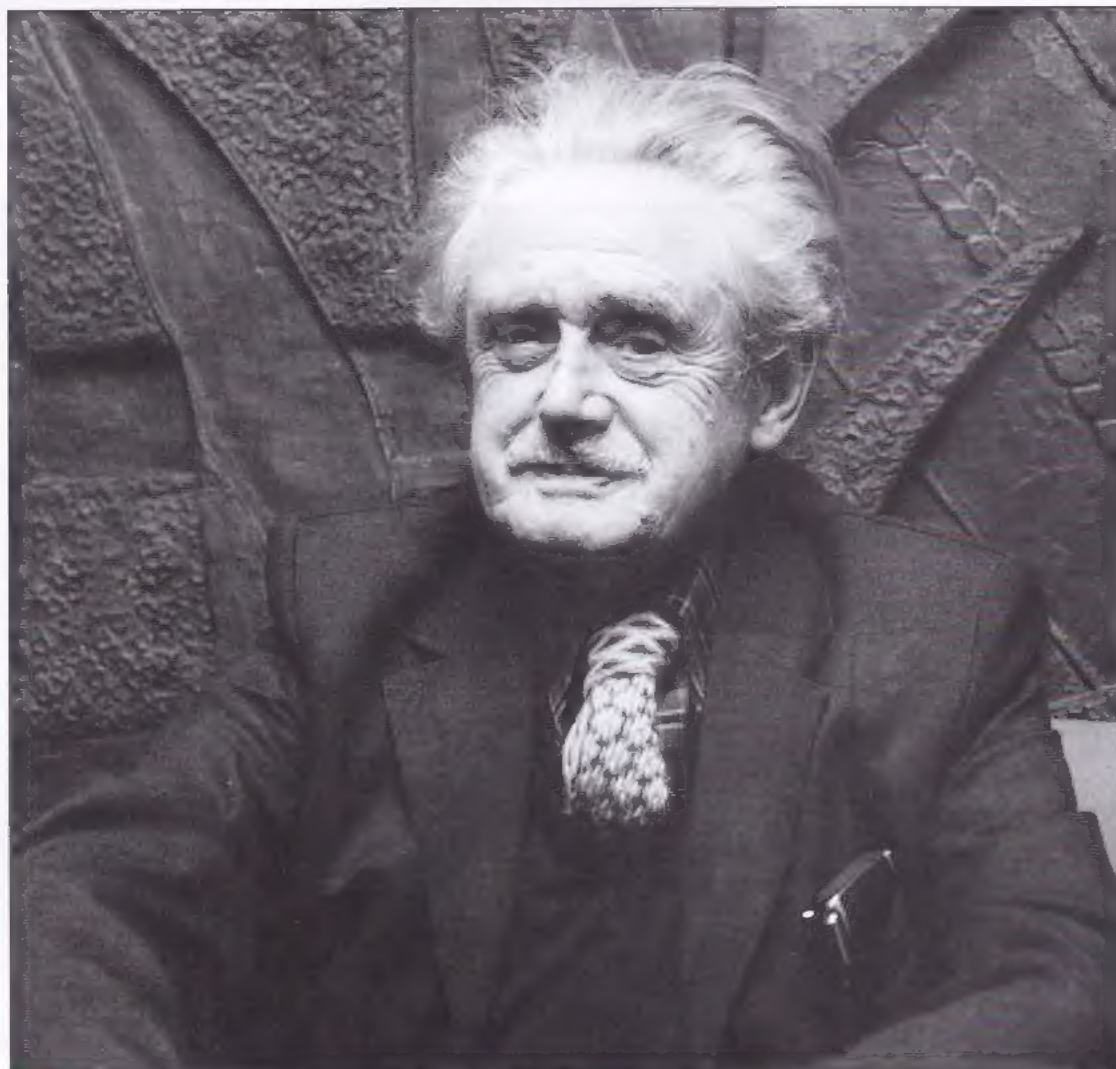
Hugh MacDiarmid can rightly be claimed to be the single most influential figure in the development of Scottish culture in the 20th century. The fact that in the 1920s he wrote the most important poetry in Scots since Burns and, in the 1930s, some of the most important modernist poetry produced in Britain, would alone have given him a place of enormous significance in Scottish literature.

But MacDiarmid combined poetic creativity with a battling political consciousness, an enormous energy for polemic and a talent for using the media that was, through the 1920s, to give substance to the notion of a completely new beginning in Scottish culture. It was one that could appropriately be described as a 'Scottish Renaissance'.

It was a term MacDiarmid was to adopt, implying not only an artistic revival but a complete revitalisation of Scottish national identity.

With the publication of his own epic poem, 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle', in 1926 and the founding of the National Party of Scotland in 1928, it looked as though MacDiarmid's campaign was destined to have the same kind of impact in Scotland that W B Yeats's 'Irish Revival' movement had had in Ireland. In Ireland a cultural renaissance had inspired both the Irish Rebellion of 1916 and the struggle for independence that led to the establishment of the Free State in 1922.

By 1935, however, MacDiarmid



■ Scot of passion: Hugh MacDiarmid believed Scotland's native genius was in need of recovery.

was living in isolation in Whalsay in Shetland, expelled from the nationalist movement for his communism, and in dispute with former supporters such as Edwin Muir about the real meaning of the Renaissance movement.

The paradox of MacDiarmid's role in modern Scottish culture is founded on the fact that 'MacDiarmid' was a fiction, a pseudonym invented by Christopher Murray Grieve.

Grieve, born in Langholm in 1892, returned from service in the First World War in 1919, combining his ambitions to be a writer with a nationalism born of the experience of fighting for the rights of small nations.

Grieve believed that Scottish writing had to escape from the parochialism of the Kailyard and could only do so by measuring itself

against European standards.

In that context, he believed that writing in Scots was a dead end which could be of no value to modern Scottish authors.

When, therefore, in 1922, he began writing poems in Scots, inspired by reading Sir James William's 'Lowland Scotch as Spoken in the Lower Strathearn District of Perthshire' (1915), he attributed them to 'his friend', Hugh MacDiarmid.

The use of Scots was to transform Grieve from a rather traditional 'English' poet into an extraordinarily innovative Scottish poet.

Grieve was to be better known from that point as 'Hugh MacDiarmid' but this initial conflict between Grieve and MacDiarmid was to become symptomatic of MacDiarmid's cultural and political

stances: as he put it in 'A Drunk Man', the important issue was to:

"Ha'e nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whaur extremes meet..."

For MacDiarmid, there were always more complexities to any issue than traditional political organisations – or traditional thought – could accept. The fact that he rejoined the Communist Party in 1956 after the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising was symptomatic of his fundamentally oppositional stance on almost every issue.

From MacDiarmid's work derives the modern tradition of Scots poetry, from Sidney Goodsir Smith to Robert Garioch, that uses, in different degrees, MacDiarmid's 'synthetic Scots' as its model.

'Synthetic Scots' allows the poet to use Scots words from any region

the Scottish thistle

of Scotland and from any historical period. Rather than poetry written in a local dialect it is poetry written in a language which exists only in literature.

This tradition has been fundamental to many of the most important developments in 20th century Scottish writing, but the debate about the role of Scots was to be a divisive one, both at a cultural and a political level.

For MacDiarmid, the use of Scots was fundamental to the recognition of Scotland's absolute difference from England. He thought that it would be possible to recreate Scots as the living language of Scotland, as the Norwegians had done by reshaping their language out of its fragmentary dialects.

This ignored, however, the real power in the modern world of international English – especially the English of the new media – and, by the 1930s, while MacDiarmid continued to propagandise for the use of Scots and of Gaelic as the fundamental requirements of a separate Scottish consciousness, he was himself increasingly writing in English.

The change in MacDiarmid's use of language can be seen by comparing the opening of one of his early poems, 'The Eemis Stane', from 'Sangschaw' (1925), with the opening of one of his most famous long poems from the 1930s, 'On a Raised Beach'.

'The Eemis Stane' exploits the rich potential of Scots words to generate suggestions of meaning, even when their exact meaning may not be known to the reader.

*I' the how-dumb-deid o' the cauld
hairst nichi*

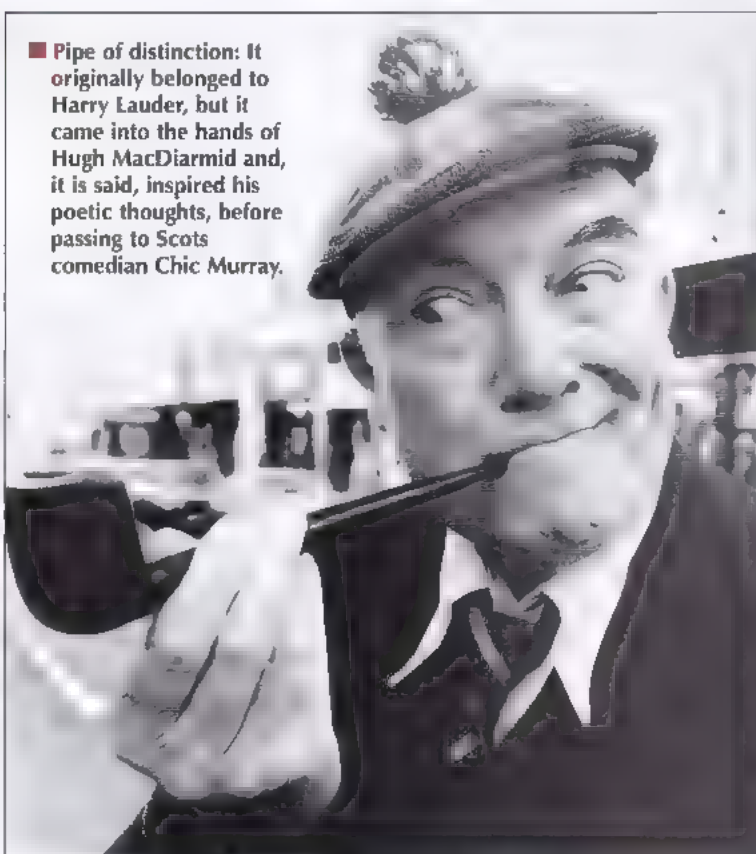
*The warl' like an eemis stane
Wags i' the life,*

*In' my serie memories ja
Like a yowdendrife*

That 'the how-dumb-deid' is the middle of the night, that an 'eemis stane' is a stone poised on a cliff ready to fall, that a 'yowdendrife' is the effect of a blizzard which buries sheep ('ewes') are meanings which, even when explained, do not undermine the suggestive potential of 'dumb' and 'deid' in the first line or the sense of claustrophobia in the final line.

The opening of 'On a Raised Beach' presents an entirely different

■ **Pipe of distinction:** It originally belonged to Harry Lauder, but it came into the hands of Hugh MacDiarmid and, it is said, inspired his poetic thoughts, before passing to Scots comedian Chic Murray.



kind of difficulty

*All is lithogenesis – or lochia,
Carpelite fruit of the forbidden tree.
Stones blacker than any in the Caaba,
Cream-coloured caen-stone, chatoyant
pieces,
Celadon and corbeau, bistre and beige,
Glaucous, hoar, enfouledered,
cyathiform,
Making mere faeculae or the sun and
moon*

This is a poetry revelling in the

of Medieval Scots.

MacDiarmid's later poetry he described as a 'poetry of fact' – "A poetry full of erudition, expertise, and ecstasy".

Its effort to achieve a vast synthesis of scientific and artistic knowledge makes it among the most ambitious by any poet in the English-speaking world in the 20th century.

But it has found few

He had a dream – it was to have modern Scottish culture taking its place on the European stage and properly recognised for its worth.

specialist languages, and combining them with the traditional poetic resources of assonance and alliteration.

The reader in both cases is challenged to learn a new language, but the apparently more familiar language of modern English is, in fact, much more difficult to learn than the apparently distant language

readers and only a few interested critics.

Despite the direction in which his own writing developed, the belief that a new Scottish culture could only be created by a return to writing in a 'pure' Scots was to lead MacDiarmid into a long battle against the influence of Burns and all of the writers since the 18th century.

... expressive ... its potential ... into canniness ... by 'the baneful and degrading influence of the Renaissance ... subtle subjugation and ... to England'.

The history of Scottish culture could therefore be seen only as one of continuous decline, as he wrote in 'Albyn': "The history of Scottish Vernacular poetry... since the days of the Auld Makars, is a history of the progressive relinquishment of magnificent potentialities for the creation of a literature which might well have rivalled the English."

"The only challenge to the decline was that of Allan Ramsay and Ferguson – which Burns, in the last analysis, betrayed."

"The influence of Burns has reduced the whole field of Scots letters to a 'kailyard'."

MacDiarmid's 'Renaissance' was to be the rebirth of Scotland only by undoing all actual Scottish history in order to recover an essence which it had failed to develop.

In the 1960s, up to his death in 1978, MacDiarmid was honoured for his contributions to the development of his country for the political and cultural movements of his time, both nationalist and internationalist. His work, and for the stimulus he had given to the development of an independent Scottish culture.

Many of the achievements of modern Scottish writing could be traced back to his wide-ranging experiments and to his ambition to make Scottish culture truly of European standing.

His presentation of Scottish culture, however, emphasised the problems rather than the potentialities of the Scottish context and was to justify several generations of critics in seeing the story of Scottish culture as fundamentally a story of failure.

MacDiarmid's polemic 'against' Scotland's past was, for many, to be more influential than his grand visions of Scotland's possible future, undermining the very Renaissance which he sought. ●

Quest to discover

The 'renaissance' in writing grew in the aftermath of the First World War. In essence, it was the search to find the bases of Scotland's cultural distinction. The trail led the hunters in several directions

The phrase 'the Scottish Renaissance' was coined by the French critic Denis Saurat to describe the new wave of Scottish writing in the 1920s, and particularly the potentialities unleashed by the work in Scots of Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978)

MacDiarmid himself was to adopt the phrase and to provide the movement with an ideology based around the revival of the Scottish vernacular and the re-establishment of Scotland's psychological distinctiveness from England

MacDiarmid's role and inspiration in the 1920s has tended to be taken as defining the very nature of the Scottish Renaissance movement, but the other major writers of the period - Edwin Muir (1887-1959), Lewis Grassie Gibbon (1901-35), Neil Gunn (1891-1973), Sorley MacLean (1911-1999) - all had individual notions of what was required for a 'Scottish' Renaissance. However much they may have been stimulated by MacDiarmid, their own work is testimony to the vitality of the culture as a whole rather than just the influence of one man.

The 'Renaissance' was provoked by the consequences of the First World War. As a war fought for the rights of small nations, it inspired throughout Europe a resistance to the cultural dominance of the great Powers.

The events in Ireland between



■ Poets' gathering. MacDiarmid and his pipe surrounded by poetic friends in the famous Poets' Pub in Rose Street, Edinburgh. The gathering includes: Norman MacCaig, Sorley MacLean, Iain Crichton Smith, George Mackay Brown, Sydney Goodsir Smith, Edwin Morgan, Robert Garioch, Alan Bold and John A Tonge.

1916 and 1922, in terms of politics (the Irish Rebellion and the establishment of the Free State) and in terms of literature (the major poetry of WB Yeats and the novels of James Joyce), had underlined the potentiality for creating an independent national culture, even where imperialism seemed to have destroyed native traditions.

At the same time, the centralisation of British culture required by the War set in doubt that semi-independent role which had, since the Union, assured Scotland of its separate cultural identity.

The Renaissance movement sought to establish the cultural bases on which a revived Scottish identity could claim once more the nation's political independence.

The Scottish Renaissance did not, however, materialise out of thin air, though some accounts of it suggest that it was a miraculous rebirth from

an entirely moribund culture.

Resistance to London-domination had been growing in Scottish politics since the 1880s. It was reflected in the series of Home Rule Bills debated in the House of Commons and in the Labour Party's (unfulfilled) commitment to Home Rule.

In cultural terms, this was matched by a search for new ways of understanding the distinctiveness of Scottish identity. The Scottish Text Society's editions of the Medieval Makars inspired Scottish poets such as Pittendrigh MacGillivray and Lewis Spence to experiment with writing in 'Medieval' Scots, prefiguring the experiments of Hugh MacDiarmid.

The Renaissance movement as a whole was prefigured in the Celtic Revival of the 1890s, when Patrick Geddes's promotion of 'regionalism' led, in a wide range of arts, to efforts to rediscover Scotland's

essentially Celtic identity.

Celticists argued that the Celtic elements in Scotland, along with those in Ireland, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany in France, represented the surviving elements of the earliest and most widespread of European cultures, one which was effectively the foundation upon which British history had been built.

Celticism was fundamental to the development of modernist art in Britain - the 'art nouveau' of Rennie Mackintosh, for instance, takes some of its abstract patterns from Celtic designs - and far from being a nostalgic recollection of a dying culture, it represented the basis on which thinkers like Geddes could envisage alternatives to the utilitarianism of Victorian culture.

Geddes's efforts, from the 1880s onwards, to combine a local, national form of culture with the impulses of a cosmopolitan

Scotland's identity



■ John Knox: a 'repressive' force.

modernism was, *the driving force of the Scottish Renaissance movement.*

MacDiarmid in his Scots poetry the features of a Scottish vernacular stretching back to the Medieval period with the styles of contemporaries as defined by T S Eliot and Ezra Pound

MacDiarmid's most and experimental by his researches into the sources of Medieval Scots we Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language the major figures of the Renaissance movement attempted a combination of the local with the international.

In this they were the writers around in the aftermath of the First World War, were seeking ways of revitalising the language of English literature by recovering an alternative local culture

MacDiarmid described his programme for the future consisting of three elements. 1 - to recover and ensure the essence of [Scotland's] own genius, 2 - to reduce England from its ascendancy internally, imperially, and internationally to its own proper national condition; 3 - to reaffiliate with Europe, and recognize our duty as the Western Frontier of Europe.

Defining Scotland in European culture and redefining Scotland's relationship with England's cultural 'ascendancy' demanded that Scottish writers develop a distinctive linguistic medium in which Scottish identity

...mid this meant adapting the potentialities of Scots to modern conditions for Lewis Grassie Simon it meant developing a prose which simulated the spoken language of the Mearns, for Neil Gunn it meant discovering through English the possibilities of relating and maintaining the symbolism of the Celtic world. In each case, the issue of finding appropriate language for modern Scottish consciousness was both the central problem that the writers faced and the driving force of their innovations

They became experimental, modernist writers precisely by trying to find ways of representing what they took to be an ancient and abiding Scottish consciousness

It is for this reason that the issue of language became the fundamental point of ideological conflict both between the Renaissance writers and their opponents and, in the end, between the contributors to the Renaissance themselves

In his early propaganda,

Diarmid insisted that it was only by the adoption of Scots, and of a Scots which went back beyond Burns to Dunbar, that the real nature of the modern Scottish psyche could be expressed

It was a view he would continue to assert even when his own poetry began to develop, first, into a more 'demotic' Scots in his communist inspired poems about the contemporary working classes, and then into the 'synthetic English' which he believed was the appropriate medium for exploring the relationship between science and the modern world

For MacDiarmid, the issue was not whether to write in Scots or in English - the issue was of finding a language in which it would be possible for the poet to encompass the whole nature of the modern world from the point of view of the Scottish people. In Scotland, as James MacGillivray's 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle' asserts, based on the fact that

He canna Scotland see wha yet Canna

And Scotland in true scale to it
But MacDiarmid's assertion of a



■ Neil Gunn: he sought a way to preserve the Celtic cultural symbolism.

new Scottish culture was founded on the denial of almost everything which passed as Scottish culture in the modern world. Scotland was the 'doom' in which the modern artist was trapped

*And as I looked I saw them
In the Scots bath big and sma',
That e'er the brith a' life did drin
Herey o' Gode, I canna thole
Wi' sic an orra mob to roll
Wheesh! It's for the guid o' your*

Scotland becomes, for MacDiarmid, the failed culture against which the modern artist measures his own supremacy

It was over the issue of language that MacDiarmid and Edwin Muir, one-time allies in the movement for

a Scottish Renaissance, were to come to dispute in the 1930s leading to a life long estrangement

Muir had established himself by the 1920s, as one of the leading critics of contemporary British writing and had experimented with writing in Scots

He came to see, however, that the use of Scots as a fundamental limitation on the poet's freedom

It was, he felt, cannot be used for literary purposes of a universal kind. An argument can be advanced for using it for poetry. Hugh MacDiarmid 'is a poet of great originality, but if Scots does not become an independent language he will probably be known as a writer who fashioned a speech

What linked MacDiarmid and Muir was a deep-seated antagonism to John Knox, who they both saw as a perverter of the nation

■ Sorley MacLean used Gaelic for entirely new poetic and political purposes.



► of his own, which has to be specially learned before he can be appreciated"

As a result, Muir viewed the Scottish Renaissance movement, like the Irish Revival, as fundamentally a movement in English. His own poetry fulfilled this, being written in an English which was undemanding in terms of vocabulary though intensely suggestive in terms of its symbolism and rooted in the local significance of his early life in Orkney.

What linked MacDiarmid and Muir, however, was their deep antagonism to the Reformation and all of its consequences. John Knox, who had been, for 19th-century Scottish Presbyterianism, the founder of the nation, became, in the eyes of the Scottish Renaissance, the perverter of the nation, the person who had distorted Scotland from its original self and imposed upon it a repressive, art-denying and life-denying theology.

The Reformation was also seen as the promoter of the values which had led to the Industrial Revolution and to all the destructive consequences of industrialism in the modern Scottish cities.

All of the writers of the Renaissance wanted to return to some earlier, formative of Scottish culture which was as yet

unperverted by Calvinism and Industrialism.

For Grassie Gibbon this was the world of the peasantry, which still harboured the last memory of an earlier form of human society that was free from religion and from oppression; for Muir it was the Orkney of his childhood, a world still wrapped round with myths that made human life meaningful, for Gunn it was the world of Highland society before it was corrupted by the intrusions of modernity.

Each sought a 'golden age' before the fall into modern history which could provide an alternative to the modern condition. This was not a sentimental belief in the superiority of the past over the present; it was belief that modern society had gone desperately wrong and needed radical alteration based on alternative values.

For the Renaissance movement a new and modern Scotland for the 20th century was only possible on the basis of a return to some earlier form of Scottish life which would supplant the destructive Scotland they had inherited from the 19th century.

In Ireland, W B Yeats had succeeded in mobilising a Celtic past as part of the mythology of the modern Irish nation: the Scottish Renaissance movement achieved no

such political success. It never managed, as the Irish writers did, to engage with major political forces.

It took place in a context of political failure – the failure of the Labour Government of 1924 and the General Strike in 1926 – and of the world economic depression of which Scotland's heavy industries were one of the main victims.

Even the nationalist movement in Scotland, once it established itself as a political force, tended to be resistant to what it saw as the eccentricities of the artists. It focused more on economic than on cultural factors and the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s was also to make the nationalist dimension of the Renaissance movement increasingly unpalatable to many of those who saw little difference between nationalism and fascism.

The importance of the Renaissance was only to be acknowledged in the 1960s and 70s when the real scale of its artistic achievement began to be recognised and when its engagement with issues of Scottish identity found an audience among a new generation for whom traditional Scottish identity as part of the British Empire was finally a thing of the past.

The Renaissance began the process of separating Scottish

identity from British identity, of defining the ways in which an autonomous Scottish tradition had survived despite the imposition of 'English' cultural values on Scotland as a consequence of the Union.

Most of all, however, the Renaissance writers explored new modes of writing which were distinctively different from those in England or Ireland and which have laid the foundations of much of today's Scottish writing.

In its use of Scots and the voice of the folk to tell the experience of his working-class characters in the period around the First World War, Lewis Grassie Gibbon's 'A Scots Quair' (1932-34), establishes the equality of Scots as a literary language, and so breaks the ground that James Kelman and Irvine Welsh have developed.

Neil Gunn's narratives in his many novels of Highland life, such as 'Highland River' (1937) and 'The Silver Darlings' (1941), explore the role of the mythic unconscious that shapes the experience of the most rootless of modern human beings, and develop styles which will be elaborated by Iain Crichton Smith, Robin Jenkins and even Alan Warner.

Edwin Muir, in his explorations of the relationship between the 'story' of modern history and the 'fable' which underlies and gives significance to it, provides a language which will be used by poets such as George Mackay Brown and novelists such as Alasdair Gray.

Sorley MacLean, by his use of Gaelic for entirely modern poetic and political purposes, provided the foundations on which modern Gaelic poetry had been built. The Scottish Renaissance movement failed in the political purposes that MacDiarmid set it; it succeeded, however, in establishing not only a new standard of artistic achievement for Scottish writers but in formulating the ways in which Scottish culture would be envisaged for the next 50 years – ways which, in the long term, would have profound effects upon Scottish social and political life.

When Runrig combined Gaelic with rock music or when the Proclaimers combined country and western with Scottish vernacular lyrics, they were uniting the local and the cosmopolitan as demanded by Scottish Renaissance movement, and fulfilling at the popular level the Renaissance's ambition of a Scottish culture at once nationally distinctive and internationally modern. ●

'Come north to the hills by crag and by scree'



■ Vision of Glencoe at the Allan Rurg Bridge which was designed in 1922 to take the A82 over a burn. The West Highlands were suddenly beckoning.

The early youth hostel movement had enormous success in opening up Scotland as a land of adventure. It was not, however, an easy path they marched. 'Thou shalt not pass' was the motto of some land owners

Like many of his fellow Glaswegian workers Tom Weir, a grocery apprentice in Springburn, was permitted one day of leisure a week. Throughout 1929, he chose to spend his Sunday's 'tramping' in the Highlands. He was astounded by what he found

To the north and west of the city were places beyond the realms of his urban imagination. He gazed in wonder at

Ben Nevis, its mighty cliffs patched with snow-wreaths, the white-washed croft-house of Sronaba, cow and calves grazing above the burn, and a smell of peat from the chimney new to me

Thousands of young tenement dwellers would soon follow in the footsteps of Tom Weir. During the inter-war years, Scotland witnessed an explosion of interest in the great outdoors. Ramblers, hikers, cyclists, youth hostellers and rock climbers joined the swelling ranks of day trippers and tourists setting out to discover the Highlands

The popularity of the countryside among everyday folk rose in tandem with the development of modern transport networks

Coaches, trams, trains and paddle-steamers journeying 'doon the watter', opened up new locations at budget prices. Villages such as Inverey and Arrochar on the Firth of Clyde quickly became favourite haunts for jovial, and at times raucous, picnic crowds

For the more adventurous, among them a generation of aspiring and talented mountaineers, tests of nerve and athletic ability could be found higher up on the 'Arrochar Alps' or among the looming crags of Glencoe

Meanwhile, the improvement of roads leading to Fort William and beyond into the north-west opened up new mountainous areas to the energetic visitor. Further distant still, and lying tantalisingly just across the sea, were the Cuillins of Skye, with challenges aplenty for even the most daring climber

However, this rush to experience nature at first hand did not meet with universal approval. After all, the mountains, glens and lochsides had not always been so noisily and colourfully populated. Indeed, the activities popularised during the inter-war years were a far cry from the outdoor scene in ►

► the late 19th century, when the Highlands were an exclusive playground for Britain's social elite. Royal Deeside is an appropriate place to begin tracing the origins of these changes.

Having taken up residence at Balmoral Castle in 1855, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert developed an immediate taste for all things Highland. Theirs was a Romantic vision inspired by the novels of Sir Walter Scott and depicted in the paintings of Sir Edwin Landseer, a vision of tartan and clans, of dancing and Gaelic song, of an idyllic life spent among the mountains, and of days occupied by local sporting activities.

Deer stalking was one of the Royal's favoured pastimes. While various types of hunting had been practised in the region over the centuries, modern stalking involved tracking and shooting native red deer on foot over open hillsides.

Stalking was enthusiastically adopted as the leisure pursuit of choice by the aristocracy, all too keen to experience the same romantic Highland lifestyle as the monarchy.

Following not far behind were industrialists, businessmen and those from the highest ranks of the military, keen to show off the huge profits which they had made through the British Empire.

Typical was John Bullough, a Lancastrian entrepreneur, who having amassed his fortune from textiles, rewarded himself by transforming the island of Rum into his very own wild game reserve.

For the titled classes, the new rich and the politicians of Westminster, deer stalking quickly became an important status symbol. That it did not come cheaply was one of stalking's chief attractions.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the aspiring Highland landowner, or laird, had to create his own sporting estate. This involved the conversion of thousands of acres of land from existing Highland sheep farms into what were termed deer forests.

Confusingly, these 'forests' were very often treeless expanses of empty and barren terrain where rough upland grazing and lower pasture lands had been allowed to revert to a vegetation cover of heather. Although perhaps unpalatable to our current tastes, it was in these depopulated mountain arenas that deer herds were managed to roam free before being 'bagged' by privileged sportsmen.

The activities of each estate,



■ Wind in the face: a group take the high road from Loch Ard Youth Hostel in 1959 as the Highlands opened up.

Verbal and sometimes physical attacks were made on walkers

Among several forests and a lodge, the tenness were the natural qualities for these sporting residences. Normally located in the heart of the deer forest and some miles from the transport network, lodges were reached by newly-built private roads along which access could be controlled.

One lodge belonged to the Duke of Sutherland, and set at £10,000 a year of prime sports offered invited guests the comfort of 13 bedrooms, the attention of over 20 staff, and the freedom of a fully equipped tennis court to say nothing of the ripe pickings from a well-tended fruit and vegetable garden. Here friends could be entertained, family accommodated and servants quartered throughout the autumn stalking season.

By the turn of the century, deer

stalking was being successfully combined with other sporting activities. Grouse were the most popular among the many gamebirds reared on estates for shooting, while salmon and trout fishing continued to attract those more skilled with the rod than the gun.

While the wildlife survived in enough numbers, the sportsmen kept up their 'great game'. Such was the dominance of the sporting estate in the Highlands that by 1912 the land kept under deer forest had reached a total of over 3.5 million acres, comprising 201 major estates and some 19 per cent of Scotland's total surface area.

Every effort was made to devote the use of this land solely to sport. Quite unprepared to share the wilderness upon which they had lavished such expense, protective lairds employed local people to guard their sporting kingdoms. During the 1890's, Walter Winans,

an American landowner in Kintail, had a small army of men ready to ward off poachers, would-be mountaineers and unwary wanderers. Verbal and on occasion physical attacks were made on those seeking access to the mountains. This policy of exclusion was made all the more effective through the enforced closure of inns and hotels located within the forests.

Alternatively, establishments like the Cluanie Inn were under direct orders to refuse accommodation to those visitors who arrived on foot. Meanwhile recognised paths and rights-of-way were blocked and bridges over rivers demolished.

For the moment, Winans and his fellow lairds, need not have worried too greatly. Prior to the 1920s, Scotland's walkers and climbers were a select few, drawn from the same upper class circles of British society. Many were products of an Oxbridge education, and members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club.

Having spent a leisurely summer exploring the Alps, these

At times tempers frayed, but fresh approaches slowly changed attitudes

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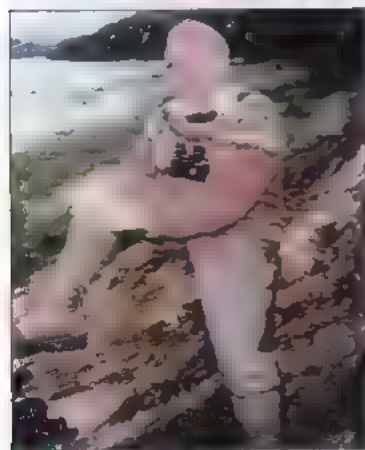
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ground on the Scottish mainland.

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over a disorderly
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progressive approach to outdoor
recreation and

The Scottish
Association was
stated objective
but especially
limited means



■ Mountain man Tom Weir.



■ Successful deer stalk at Loch Shiel, Argyll, in 1910. The stag's head trophy was the object for the upper classes.

industrial and other areas, to know, use, and appreciate the Scottish countryside and places of historic and cultural interest in Scotland, and to promote their health, recreation and education'

This would be achieved by 'providing simple hostel accommodation for them on their travels'. True to its word, the SYHA established hostels across the country, with the majority located in the Highlands

The buildings used as hostels varied enormously in style and grandeur. They included a converted boathouse at Loch Ossian, a disused shepherd's cottage at Badbea, old Forestry Commission huts at Ratagan, and a large Norwegian style timber construction in Glen Nevis

Meanwhile, the weary hiker reaching Carbisdale could spend the night in the same castle which, in its heyday, had housed the Highlands' sporting elite. The Scottish hostelling movement was an undoubted success story. The Association's total of nine hostels and 1,130 members at the end of 1931 had swelled to 57 hostels and almost 39,000 members by 1944.

The SYHA's contributions were not limited to the provision of shelter and bed space. Its organisers, some of them landowners themselves, made great efforts to present the Association as the more lively, and official face of Scotland's new outdoor community

Still troubled by memories of the great many Scots who had died during the First World War, and

concerned by the growing ranks of unemployed workers, they saw the movement's potential as a new expression of patriotism.

Accordingly, the SYHA played an active part in educating its membership on 'the ways of the countryside', while helping them to know and be proud of their country

Handbooks supplied information on local geography, botany, history, navigation skills and most importantly of all, the SYHA's accepted access codes. Routes to follow between hostels and up certain hills or mountains were carefully specified, with maps helping to clarify the 'good path' to be taken

The hostel itself was a carefully controlled environment. Alcohol was strictly prohibited, a healthy diet encouraged, cleanliness made a priority and a curfew hour enforced

This said, ceilidhs and late-night sing songs offered exciting new social freedoms to the most inquisitive. Nevertheless, the

ultimate purpose of hostelling life remained clear – to breed confident, respectable, self-reliant and physically fit young Scots.

By enabling people to travel through and experience what was once a wholly alien and private rural environment, Scotland's youth hostels fulfilled a crucial role in the popular discovery of the Highlands

Memories of fitful sleep in a spartan hostel dormitory might still inspire mixed emotions for veterans of the scene. Arguably, the SYHA also tempered the more radical and rebellious elements of Scotland's early outdoor movement

Whatever their politics, most would share the sentiments of the adopted Hostel Song

*Come tramping by lochan by forest
and glen,
Come shoulder your pack, bend your
back to the ben
Come north to the mountains by crag
and by scree
Or south to the lowlands – come
tramping with me* ■



■ Glencoe outing: in 1902 the legal speed for the open road was 10mph.

Sectarian hatred at its most virulent



■ Focus of sectarianism: the Carfin Grotto in Lanarkshire attracted anti-Catholic attention. Here Father Taylor takes a service in July, 1922.

The anti-Catholic brigade between the wars was not only blatant but insidious. There was also a chief tormentor - enter John Cormack

In the last months of the First World War the novelist John Buchan (1875-1940) was writing the third of his Richard Hannay thrillers, 'Mr Standfast'. Like its predecessors, 'The Thirty-Nine Steps' and 'Greenmantle', it was partly very clever war propaganda, in which Buchan was also professionally engaged.

But the Germans were not its only targets. Hannay is listening to a labour organiser in Glasgow, Andrew Amos (chapter four): "The average man on the Clyde,

like the average man in other places, hates just three things and that's the Germans, the profiteers as they call them, and the Irish."

"The Irish!" I explained in astonishment.

"Ay, the Irish", cried the last of the old Border radicals. "Glasgow's stinkin' nowadays with two things, money and Irish. I mind the day when I followed Mr Gladstone's Home Rule policy, and used to threep about the noble, generous, warm-hearted sister nation held in a foreign bondage."

"My Goad! I'm not speakin' "

about Ulster, which is a dour, ill-natured den, but our own folk all the same. But the men that will not do a hand's turn to help the war and take the chance of our necessities to set up a bawbee rebellion are hateful to Goad and man."

"We treated them like pet lambs and that's the thanks we get. They're coming over here in thousands to take the jobs of the lads that are doing their duty."

Before the War Buchan had been a Unionist Tory, in a party implicated in Ulster Unionist



The place is Ibrox Park, the occasion Scotland versus Germany, 1936. The Germans could not resist giving the Nazi salute. They lost 2-0.

Author John Buchan helped create the image of job-stealing, Papists who supported the Germans



■ Oswald Mosley and his Fascists are pictured in 1931 at a Glasgow Green rally.

commitment to resist Irish Home rule by force of arms imported from Germany

During the war the Liberal Government became increasingly Tory, and its Tories had a secret end of self-vindication. So although thousands of Irish Catholic officers and men volunteered for service in the UK forces, Tory commanders often discouraged and disheartened them, and the resentment with which most of the Irish Catholics denounced the pro-German 'bawbee' Irish insurrection of Easter, 1916, was offset by widespread anger at the execution of 16 of the insurgents after secret courts-martial following their surrender.

The legend of the job-stealing Irish Catholic secret supporters of the Germans was born, and the best-selling Buchan was certainly one of its makers. It had some basis in fact, as was shown by the Belfast Protestant shipbuilding workers returning from the army in 1919 when they chased off the Catholics from Queen's Island with red-hot rivets.

The subsequent Anglo Irish war of 1919-21 and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922

meant that the Irish Catholics in Scotland, many of whom regarded themselves as temporarily resident in the larger island of the United Kingdom, now woke up to find themselves Scots.

The Irish in Scotland up to that point were not immigrants, merely internal migrants who had travelled from one part of the UK to another. Now they had either to return home to this strange New Ireland or live where they were.

Many people, including the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in 1923 suggested they should return to Ireland or be repatriated. In times past, Ireland was first priority of their Catholic newspapers, not Scotland, or Britain, and their clergy often sounded like that as well.

The 1918 Education Act for Scotland had 'put Rome on the rates', as vehement Protestants put it, by giving state support to the separate Catholic schools. It was, in fact, a statesmanlike Act: it gave Catholics a stake in the Scotland where they lived, and discouraged further feelings of rejection of Scottish or British identity.

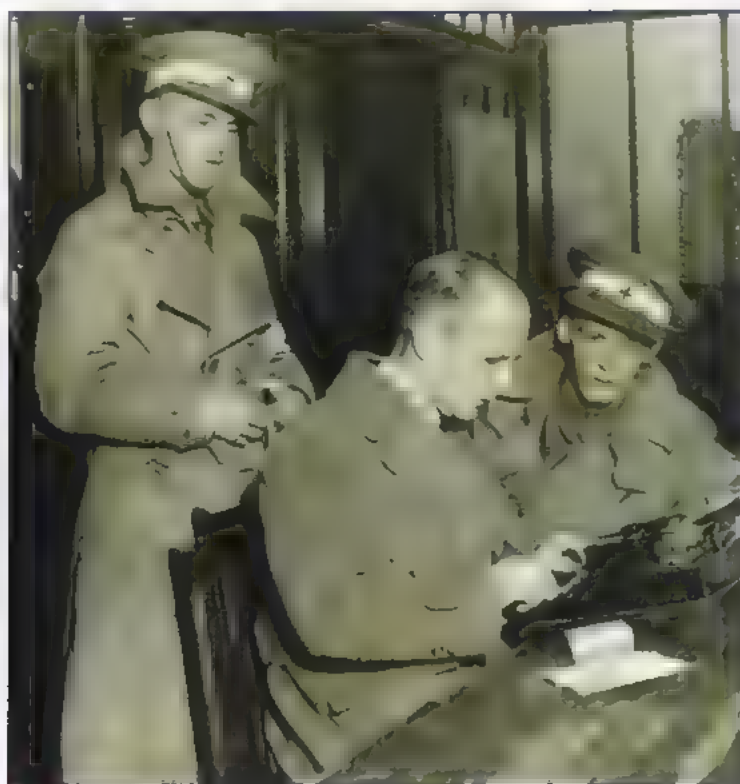
But the Church of Scotland denounced it, partly because it

formally ended the status of Presbyterianism as the sole Scottish religious identity with state recognition.

Neither Buchan nor the Church of Scotland were anti-Catholic so much as anti-Irish Catholic. Buchan's last novel, 'Sick Heart River' (1940), arguably his best, is in fact very pro-Catholic, and even in 1923 the Church of Scotland journal *Life and Work* was telling its readers: "To protest indiscriminately against Roman teaching is wrong, and the indication of a small mind. It should never be forgotten that we hold in common the great Evangelical Confession".

But dangerous doctrines were abroad. Although the Church of Scotland fought nobly and well against anti-Semitism, and made efforts against colour discrimination in these years, its pamphlet 'The Menace of the Irish Race to Our Scottish Nationality' (1923) talked of prosperity and success divinely accorded to "nations that are homogeneous in faith and ideas, that have maintained unity of race".

Bitter job competition during the slump exacerbated sectarian tension. Employer hostility to Catholics grew. Italians and native ►



Cormack was fortunate not to be interned for advocating in speeches that Protestants soldiers should shoot their Catholic comrades

■ Scots united: anti-fascists Harry Crawford and Steven Richmond are interviewed on their return from the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

► Scots Catholics suffered for the supposed wartime treachery of the Irish Catholics

The Irish Catholics were strongest in the West of Scotland, symbolised by their support for Glasgow Celtic (whose fans were banned in Ireland as supporters of a 'foreign game' by the Gaelic Athletic Association). The continued influx of Irish Catholic immigrants was matched, so to speak, by supporters of Glasgow Rangers arriving in increasing numbers from Northern Ireland.

The rivalry between the two teams became far more sectarian and the proximity of the Celtic stadium to Orange centres of activity strengthened it.

Unemployment led to street gang warfare, much of it going back to the 19th century, but much more visible now. A Scottish Protestant League founded in 1920 won several seats in Glasgow municipal elections, netting 67,000 voters or 23 per cent, in 1933.

Hostility to Catholic schools and Catholic immigration were key rallying-points, but the SPL made shrewd use of issues of social justice making common cause where it wished with Socialists, Tories and the Scottish Fascist Democratic Party (the last a short-lived party demanding expulsion of Catholic religious

orders from Scotland, repeal of state support of Catholic schools and prohibition of Irish immigration).

Pious pornography allegedly exposing sexual scandals among Roman Catholic clergy helped gain some support, including imports from North America such as the fraudulent concoction purporting to be the memoirs of convent life in the mid 19th century by the 'ex nun' Maria Monk (actually a French maidservant once employed in Montreal nunnery).

Alexander Ratchie (1884-1942) the SPL founder drew an audience of nearly 5,000 in 1930 at the Caird Hall in Dundee, where Irish Catholic immigration was high and whose history was peaceful.

Yet Ratchie made little further impact on Dundee and his support in Glasgow dwindled to seven per cent in 1934. He ended in splutters of pro-Hitler rhetoric in 1940, apparently because of Hitler's anti-Catholicism.

Glasgow's first Catholic Lord Provost, Patrick Dollan, took office in 1938 as the leading historian of sectarian tension in these years.

Professor Tom Gallagher has shown the real clash occurred in a city with little history of Protestant-Catholic sectarian

tensions or industrial job rivalry. Edinburgh.

For all its famous products of Irish Catholicism - Burke and Hare, who murdered for the anatomists, Conan Doyle the creator of Sherlock Holmes, James Connolly the Socialist theoretician who led the 1916 Rising - Edinburgh had little consciousness of Catholicism.

What convulsed the city was the emergence of a charismatic demagogue, John Cormack (1894-1978), elected to the town council for North Leith in 1934, a leader inspiring his followers where Ratchie had been a crank dividing his, and indeed becoming Ratchie's bitter public enemy.

Cormack's Protestant Action Society, formed in 1934, was enduring enough to keep him (with a break) in the council for a Leith seat until 1962, but his high tide was 1935 when he led a mob of 7,000 to intimidate the Roman Catholic Eucharistic Congress in May, assaulting priests and stoning buses transporting small children.

The next year Protestant Action polled 35,000 votes or 32 per cent in council elections, proportionally much more serious than Glasgow in 1933.

Yet if Edinburgh was Catholicism was not a

fellow Protestants such as Ratchie and growing hostility from the Orange Order (of which he was a member) weakened him.

The Orangemen found the Tory party a more reliable ally than a working-class demagogue, although his oratorical and press denunciations from Irish to Italian Catholics as war grew nearer, and incited anti-Italian violence after Mussolini entered the war in June 1940.

He was lucky not to be interned for speeches telling Protestants to shoot their Catholic fellow soldiers. Scottish common ground in resistance to the Axis powers proved more enduring than Scots' traditional anti-Catholic hostility on which Cormack had drawn.

Cormack was the closest Scotland came to a merchant of radical hatred such as Hitler or the wilder white Southern demagogues in the USA.

Even in its anti-Catholicism, Scotland was too institutionalised to be swept off its feet by unknown populists.

On a long term basis Ratchie and Cormack gave anti-Catholicism a bad name in respectable Protestant circles. But the real frightening story for anti-Catholicism was that

What happened in Glasgow between the wars was predictable enough: what happened in Edinburgh was not. ■



■ Patrick Crichton Stewart, Marquis of Bute, leads a Scottish Catholic pilgrimage to the early Christian shrine of St Ninian's cave, Whithorn.

■ Seaward a great ship: the Clyde-built Queen Elizabeth was launched in 1938.



Economic fightback - but disaster looms

Walter Elliot begins to put Scotland's affairs in order with organisation and energy, but over in Germany a sinister figure called Adolf Hitler has a quite different agenda

A 1938 photograph of a father and grandfather on holiday in Millport shows them wearing leather blousons, the fashion of that year. They look bang up-to-date. This is the first period when fashion doesn't appear archaic, but the thing that might be 'in again next year'.

In the 1930s, various fairly jolly features of modern Scottish life established themselves: holidays with

pay, hiking, day trips by car and bus, streamlining this and that, going bareheaded or open-necked, looking for the Loch Ness Monster. Yet the decade began in slump and ended in war.

The 1920s had been bad enough. In 1921, the replacing of the British merchant marine's losses was over. Orders ran out, and unemployment along Clydeside ratcheted up to 21 per cent. But the American economy

► was still booming: the 'Atlantic ferry' – the Clyde's great 'hotel ship' was full

In October, 1929 the reprieve ended. With the Wall Street crash the European economies collapsed and unemployment was even worse. Not only had markets disappeared, but with the US economy in free fall, there was nowhere to emigrate.

In the spring of 1931 it all became too much for the New York bankers who had invested billions in the European states.

The British Government – Labour since 1929, under Ramsay MacDonald – was told to cut public expenditure, causing a split in its ranks. MacDonald went to the King and offered a 'National' coalition with the Liberals and Conservatives. The man was ageing and vain. His party did not support him; but his triumph in the election of August, 1931, was overwhelming.

At Westminster 288 Labour MPs fell to 57; in Scotland from 36 to seven. There was also a specifically Scottish aspect to the crisis. In 1929 Fords established their assembly line at Dagenham on the Thames; the south-to-north flow of industry, which had marked the pre-1914 period, was reversed and this move finally knocked the Scottish motor car industry on the head.

With it went the possibility of light engineering supplying components, as in the West Midlands. Scotland's dependence on heavy engineering was even reinforced in that year by the opening of the huge Fort William aluminium smelter and its associated hydro-electric system. No way was aluminium ever going to be made



► Official guide to the tourist destination of Dunoon, 1934.



► Wasted journey: British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain is met by German diplomat von Ribbentrop on his way to meet Hitler in 1938.

To Scotland's good fortune emerged a remarkable politician of ability and vision to energise the whole country

into planes or saucepans in Scotland.

The National Government was a fraud and a throwback. Its main Tory MPs were military men and Scots lawyers. The Conservatives rapidly ditched the Liberals and free trade in favour of protection.

The real power-broker was Stanley Baldwin, Midlands steelmaker, yet on his mother's side, not just Scots – but another MacDonald! This displayed, however, something of the oddity of the situation. Ramsay MacDonald dreamily reverted to his Home Rule convictions, advised by the ever enigmatic John Buchan MP.

The Scottish establishment rebelled. Hundreds of them wrote to The Times, protesting against any shift to autonomy. But something did emerge. On May 7, 1930, the Convention of Royal Burghs had energised itself sufficiently to set up the Scottish National Development Council and in 1931 this gained the ear of the arch unionist, Sir James Lithgow, Clydeside's greatest

shipbuilding employer, who believed in a far-reaching rationalisation of heavy industry, and looked to industrial diversification to soften the blow.

So for two years he paid most of its bills. The SNDC bonded worried industrialists, councillors and the Renaissance Men, inspired by the incalculable Hugh MacDiarmid. It was shortly joined by a remarkable number of well-intentioned bodies which had Scotland on their mastheads: the Youth Hostels, the Council of Social Service, the National Trust, the Saltire Society.

Further, it was to be the good fortune of the country that such initiatives inspired perhaps its most remarkable politician – Walter Elliot.

Dr Elliot, FRS, MP – the degree came from a study of the social life of the pig – was liberal, pragmatic and highly intellectual. He had been a Fabian while at Glasgow University, along with his friends, Dr John Boyd Orr, Tom Johnston and Dr Osborne Mavor 'James

Bridie', and kept his left-wing links.

He had H G Wells' belief in benign science, but took the view that the Tory elite was better fitted to manage it than the dogmatic left. This was to say the least idiosyncratic, but it did not stop his capacity to brainstorm 'discuss things drunk and decide them sober' as Boyd Orr put it, and then act with crackling urgency.

His rescue of agriculture in 1932–35, setting up the subsidies system, showed that 'Depression area, depressed area, special area, development area' – the beginnings of British regional policy were an ex cathedra aphorism. But its roots lay in two things: combating malnutrition and saving agriculture.

Boyd Orr, who would later go on to run the World Health Organisation, investigated calcium deficiency among schoolchildren. Elliot, as minister of agriculture, saw free school milk as a lifebuoy for his struggling industry. It was on the basis of the areas of high unemployment chosen for Boyd Orr's study that government in 1933 carried the Special Areas Act.

Sir Godfrey Collins, Secretary of State, insisted on a separate Scottish commissioner, and the £4 million

Orders for four battleships and two carriers were signs that war was again in prospect

which he paid out over the years really meant the Scottish economic picture.

Under Elliot, who became Secretary of State in 1929, the Special Areas fund was set up, the Scottish Economic Committee, and the Goodchild. With Porteous, he set about studies of new armament, and which had been badly declined in the Navy.

Bodies like John Griers, fellowships, Estates, and Housing Association by it. Names in London were notably J M K there appeared spin-off. The Director of Economic

Some of the long term but was far more

£11 million on the Glasgow Empire Exhibition of 1938, coinciding with the building of a great new Cunard liner, the Queen Elizabeth. It would be a sign of the modern age in Scotland.

The architect Thomas Tait and assistants, Basil Spence and others. Bellahouston Park was a kind of out of Wells, or the German style of clean-lined steel, glass and concrete halls and pavilions, dominated by Tait's modernistic

It was the year of Munich, and it rained and rained, but the Glasgow people – and 12 million or so others – enjoyed it. The tourists came north by the streamlined 'Coronation' and 'Coronation Scot' trains, and travelled out to Bellahouston on the Corporation's streamlined 'Cunarder' trams.

Momentarily with schools, factories, hotels and flats being built in the 'moderne' style – a brave new world was as visible as the cone of Ben Lomond.

Economically, things were looking up. But not because of Elliot or the exhibition or neo-Keynesian policies. The saviour was Adolf Hitler. With the end of the disarmament conference in 1934, the Navy and Air Force began to plan for war: four battleships were laid down and two aircraft carriers

Rolls-Royce built a huge aero-engine plant on the new Hillington



■ Spirits of the age: science-fiction author H G Wells helped to inspire Scots inventor James Logie Baird on a cruise to America in 1931.



■ It is 1933 and the Daily Record's own plane is off to picture Scotland.



■ Emerging delight for pleasure-bound Scots – a paddle at Fintry Bay.

industrial estate. This upswing enabled Baldwin and his successor, Neville Chamberlain, who weren't modernism personified, to consider town-and-country planning and they appointed the Uthwart and Barlow committees to work out schemes for distributing industry and housing.

When these were published during the war, they were to provide the basis for Labour's physical planning policies – for city plans, new towns and industrial estates and Tom Johnston would give them a strong Scottish accent, which was otherwise muted.

Classic Gibbon's genius flared in the first half of the decade. Then he died. MacDiarmid croached on his stony hums on Whalsay. If anyone gave the period its distinctive Scots voice it was the goblin-like figure of Dr Mavor.

A good and dedicated medic, sharp cartoonist, and a West End dramatist overflowing with insights and fine lines, 'James Bridie' plays, they said, never quite worked. Was there, under his wit, a deep pessimism about country and world? The sense

that – out there – under the glitz of Palaces of Culture and Autobahns, something utterly evil was going on?

And that back here the connection between community and humanity had somehow atrophied.

Edwin Muir saw the powers of darkness closer up, from Prague, Kafka's and now Hitler's. He was no happier about Scotland than about them.

*Before us lay the well-worn scene, a hillock
So small and smooth and green,
it seemed intended
For us alone and childhood, a still pond
That opened upon no sight a quiet eye,
A little stream that tinkled down the slope.
But suddenly all seemed old
And dull and shrunken, shut within itself
In a sullen dream.
We were outside, alone.
And then behind us the huge gate swung open. ●*

Women writers make

■ Before the First World War, Violet Jacob with her 'Sheep-stealers' repudiated the idea that almost all Scottish fiction of this period was deemed to be of the 'Kailyard' variety.

Too often they played second fiddle or were ignored. But their undisputed talent at last emerged and Scotland's female literary giants began to receive their due acknowledgement

The Scottish Renaissance movement of the 1920s and 1930s was dominated by male writers

MacDiarmid's 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle' was characteristic in its assertion of an essentially male perspective on Scottish culture, and later criticism underlined that male dominance by focusing on the achievement of the four major male writers of the Renaissance

Symptomatic of this was, for instance, the fact that Edwin Muir was regularly cited not only as a major poet and critic but as the translator of Franz Kafka's influential stories and novels, while his wife, Willa Muir, who was the expert in German, was ignored, both as translator and as a novelist and short story-writer

Equally, Lewis Grassie Gibbon's achievement in presenting a female consciousness through Scots in 'Sunset Song' (1932) was regularly lauded as the major Scottish



achievement in the novel, ignoring entirely the fact that its plot and style were significantly influenced by Nan Shepherd's 'The Quarry Wood' (1928), which also presents the experiences of a young woman growing up in a peasant community in the North East of Scotland

Recovering the contribution of women writers in the first half of the 20th century has been crucial to a full understanding of the nature and achievements of Scottish culture, for the women writers not only provide an entirely different perspective on the nature of Scottish

experience but are, in certain cases, the outstanding artists of their generation, despite the fact that they suffered even more from the problems of finding publishers and receiving public acknowledgement than their male contemporaries

The potentialities of poetry for Scots, assumed to be fundamental to the Scottish Renaissance movement, was already being explored in the period before the First World War by Violet Jacob (1863-1946), whose novels 'The Sheep-stealers' (1902) and 'Flemington' (1910) give the lie to the notion that all Scottish fiction

of this period except Douglas Brown's 'The House with the Green Shutters' (1901) is 'Kailyard'

The work of Marion Angus (1866-1946), while rooted in traditional folk literature, also challenges the stereotypes of what was possible within the medium of Scots without adopting MacDiarmid's notions of 'synthetic Scots'

Equally significant is the working-class fiction of Dot Allan (1892-1964), whose novels such as 'Hunger March' (1933) provide the urban and industrial perspective that is

their breakthrough

often asserted to be missing from Scottish fiction

It is the Scottish tradition of women novelists that has been most neglected by modern criticism

Among the most popular and successful of modern Scottish writers are Annie Swan (1943) and John Buchan's Anna, who wrote under the pseudonym O. Douglas (1877-1940)

Their fiction, like that of 'Aldersyde' (1884) and 'Pink Sugar' (1911), is 'popular' but it is the perception of Scott that is generally 'Kailvard'

In the inter-war period, there are four main novelists at work, compares with their male counterparts

They are Catherine (1879-1946), Willa Muir (1890-1970), Nan Shepherd (1893-1981) and Naomi Mitchison (1897-1999)

Catherine is remembered for her biographies, 'Burns' (1930), which is many of the pre- and post-Burns 'myth', and 'Pilgrimage: A Narrative of Lawrence' (1931)

The influence of her upbringing in 'Ope' (1920) offers a very different conception of Glasgow, the impoverished environment presented in most Scottish fiction. It is also a challenge to a young woman's search for spiritual freedom

Willa Muir and Nan Shepherd were both novelists whose circumstances limited their output to a very small oeuvre, but stand as among the most significant contributors to the modern Scottish novel

Muir's novels, 'Imagined Corners' (1931) and 'Mrs Ritchie' (1933), are, like Carswell's, studies in the effort of women to resist the repressive environment of Scottish Calvinist respectability, which Muir also attacked in her essay 'Mrs Grundy in Scotland' (1936)

'Imagined Corners', in particular, is a novel which, in scope and



■ Willa Muir in her fiction allowed women to escape from the prisoner image of Calvinistic repression.

intensity and in the complexity of its construction of character interactions, is an achievement matched only by the work of Shepherd, whose 'Quarry Wood' (1928) and 'The Weatherhouse' (1930) are among the most sophisticated and complex written by any 20th-century Scottish writer

In Shepherd's novels, Scots and English, rural and urban, and the clash between male and female perspectives on history and society are combined in a style which infuses narratives of modern Scotland with the styles and resources of a traditional folk literature

Shepherd's novels are also explorations of the philosophy of the 'personal' which, in the work of her friend, John Macmurray, was to be one of the central contributions of modern Scottish thought to 20th

century philosophy. For many modern critics, Shepherd's small oeuvre is the jewel of the modern Scottish novel

The work of Naomi Mitchison, on the other hand, suffers from the problem of its sheer scale. She wrote over 70 books in a long life, ranging from political diaries, children's stories and science fiction to poetry and autobiography, and much of it is now unavailable

However, her major novels, 'The Corn King and the Spring Queen' (1931) and 'The Bull Calves' (1947) both tackle issues of the relationship between myth, religion and political history which were crucial to the Renaissance movement. 'The Bull Calves', in particular, engages with the whole tradition of Scottish historical fiction from Walter Scott's 'Waverley' in an effort to construct a reconciliation between the

conflicting elements of Scottish tradition

The Scotland of the period between the First and Second World Wars looks very different when seen through the eyes of these women writers than when seen through the eyes of their male contemporaries: it is a place of more social complexity, with a much more significant role given to the urban middle classes, and it is a place more securely rooted in its own traditional culture

What is more important from a literary perspective, however, is that there were writers who were experimenting with forms of narrative whose insistence on the value of communal culture, rather than individualistic achievement, are absolutely central to what Scottish culture considered distinctive about itself in the 20th century. ●

Gawking tourists on



They had never seen a tree, eaten an apple, used money or needed a clock. Then the early visitors arrived - and found the 'mystical' islanders did not enjoy being treated like zoo animals

Even in our present era of mass tourism, the freedom to travel is for the most part a privilege of the wealthy; those who can afford it often choose to visit those who assuredly cannot.

For the industrial and aristocratic elite of Victorian Britain, to travel was an expression of good taste and a badge of refinement. While a tour of European cities could provide a classical education, the Scottish Highlands offered an aesthetic one.

In the first half of the 18th century, however, a trip to the Highlands was unthinkable. The popular view was that the landscape - like the Jacobite hoards who inhabited it - was barbarous and threatening. But in the middle of the century, two books changed this image for ever.

The first was by the conservative political theorist Edmund Burke, who in 1757 published a philosophical treatise on 'the sublime and the beautiful'. Three years later, James

MacPherson, a hitherto unknown Scottish schoolteacher 'discovered' the poems of Ossian and in doing so canonised the Highland landscape and launched the beginnings of Scottish tourism.

Of the many impressive sites on the itinerary of the Scottish sublime - the Falls of Clyde, the Dunkeld Hermitage, Staffa - there was one small island archipelago which represented the climax of any tour.

St Kilda, a group of remote and near-vertical islands 40 miles west of the Outer Hebrides, found their way into the popular imagination like no other part of Gaelic Scotland.

The landscape of St Kilda, with its dramatic perpendicular lines and lofty precipices, was unparalleled in the United Kingdom and, for the travellers, it was fitting that such an aesthetic jewel was so inaccessible.

This arduous journey might last several days and guaranteed considerable discomfort, which would,

of course, reflect well on the bravery and moral character of the traveller.

Such hardship was important. Not only would it accentuate the experience of the sublime, but it added greater legitimacy to the purpose of the visit. Moreover, it provided ideal fodder for the numerous pamphlets, lectures and monographs that the travellers excitedly penned on their return to civilization.

St Kilda with its curious bird-eating inhabitants was a veritable mine for other-worldly stories and humorous anecdotes which were written up in magazines, newspapers and scholarly journals.

For the historian this is perhaps the most poignant aspect of the St Kilda story: almost the entire historical record of the island is comprised of travellers' tales. So essentially prejudiced are many of these accounts, that they reveal as much about the values of the Victorian bourgeoisie

an island time forgot

than about the everyday life of the islanders.

Being able to unravel these to see past the jaundiced reports of travellers and hear the voice of the islanders has now become a challenge for historians.

Given the dubious honour of being the island 'on the edge of the world' even, according to one traveller, "out of this world" – the last of Britain's 'last of the travellers'.

When the first steam ship arrived in 1838, the islanders were so primitive that they could not satisfy the curiosity of the primitive virtues.

But the islanders were very obliging and the travellers found them to be unappealing. So, Robert Connell, for the Glasgow Herald, characterised them as dirty, lazy, and abusing savages.

And yet he complained of the "great number of children and sentimentalism upon this simple and kindly people". This sort of prose, in a genre, swinging will and patronage, contempt.

For the traveller, the obstacle in recording the life of the St Kildan was the romantic notion of the island was uncouth and its social organisation.

The islanders were 'Reformed' when the first visitor visited in the late 18th century after the arrival of John Macdonald, the first of the North, the islanders reached new heights of refinement.

Although the travellers portray the islanders as corrupted by this 'fanatical' faith of St Kilda, which was different from that elsewhere, Gardhealtachd.

The problem was that when the travellers considered themselves to be exporting moral guidance to the unwashed primitives, the islanders thought their guests to be, on the whole, an impious lot.

Many of the visitors experienced direct rebuke from the pulpit for breaking the Sabbath. To be thus



■ St Kilda, 15 May, 1923: The village on the island of Hirta looks out over the bay to the Atlantic beyond.

'They throw sweets to them, mock them, laugh and talk at their church as if it was an entertainment'

reproached by a hoard of foul smelling, shoeless peasants was too much for their imperial sensibilities to bear.

Many of the travelogues reflect this scorn for the St Kildan faith. Confirming his misgivings about the low moral character of the islanders, Robert Connell observed that the church bell, having been recovered from a wrecked ship, "serves only to remind you that you have been dropped into a nest of pirates."

A more enlightened visitor, the photographer Norman Heathcote, was not surprised that the islanders were suspicious when: "So many of the tourists treat them as if they were wild animals in the zoo. They throw sweets to them, openly mock them and I have seen them at their church door during service laughing and talking as if it was an entertainment."

While the values of the travellers

reflected that of Victorian society, with its emphases on self-reliance, enterprise and competition, the islanders did everything together and held all things in common. It could hardly be otherwise if the community was to survive in such a hazardous and unforgiving environment.

But this political organisation was almost subversive. "Before you have long set foot on St Kilda", wrote Robert Connell, "you discover that there is a species of socialism firmly rooted among the people. I came to the deliberate conclusion that this nibbling at socialism is responsible for a good deal of the moral chaos, which has so completely engulfed the islanders."

The 'moral chaos', one suspects, was a singular lack of respect for Connell himself.

If St Kildan society was a model of communal organisation, the principal mechanism of this was the Mòd, a daily meeting in front of the houses at which the men would discuss all aspects of life from theology to fishing.

One writer, John Sands records in the 1870s how he flippantly "called this assembly the Parliament."

It was an unkind joke at the expense of the St Kildans, as if this rabble of peasants could constitute a parliament!

But after the George Washington

Wilson studio took the famous if rather theatrical photograph, the myth of the St Kilda Parliament was unstoppable.

It remains strong to this day, having been given further prominence by the late Enrie Miralles, the architect of the Scottish Parliament, who drew inspiration from it in his design.

The conventional interpretation of St Kildan history has tended to be uncritical of the travellers' representations and, for the most part, has accepted their version that the islanders were the dupes of modernity, seduced by the lure of education, religion and trade.

It is certainly the case that with increasing outside contact they nurtured ambitions to experience the world beyond their own shores.

And on August 29, 1930, the remnant of a dwindling population that had continuously inhabited the islands for millennia, finally departed.

They left on HMS Harebell, with their fires still burning and their bibles open on the tables.

For a people who had never seen a bee or a tree, never used money, never needed a clock or tasted an apple, life on the mainland was going to be very, very different. ●

When forgers faced the death sentence

Thankfully, most banknote scams are detected. But 300 years of Scottish notes has given the forgers plenty of scope. Bank of Scotland has a vivid tale or two to tell...

A trawl through the annals of criminal history would yield many an infamous Scot, but who amongst us would recognise Thomas McGhie of Prestonpans? Yet McGhie deserves his place in history as the first man ever to forge a Scottish banknote.

It was in February, 1700, that the counterfeit or 'vital' £50 note was brought to the attention of the directors of Bank of Scotland. The note had successfully passed through the hands of merchants and landowners alike, before its true character was discovered.

It was startling in its simplicity and sparked consternation at the Bank – the apparent £50 note was actually a £5 note which had been hand-altered using pen and ink!

Within days more forgeries appeared, prompting the Bank to recall all the notes and commission new designs. Notices were posted in the capital's coffee houses and in the newspaper; a reward of up to £100 was offered (approximately £7,400 at today's values) for information leading to the arrest of the 'author of the villainy'.

McGhie was soon found to be the common link, and even had the brass neck to present a counterfeit note at the bank himself. In the subsequent interrogation he failed to recall the names, nationality or appearance of the



■ As a convicted forger serving time in Australia Thomas Watling, of Dumfries, was the first artist to record settlement life down under. The illustrations above show some of his undoubted artistic skills.

men who, he claimed, had given him the notes. Their business and home addresses likewise escaped him.

The most he could volunteer was that they spoke English and had been seen in various Edinburgh coffee houses! To nobody's great surprise, McGhie failed to appear at the bank the next morning, having fled to Newcastle.

And so the first salvoes were fired in the battle between the Scottish banks and the forgers.

How McGhie succeeded in passing such crude forgeries is difficult to comprehend. Today it seems barely credible that anyone could be fooled by a hand-altered note.

But a largely illiterate population, still unfamiliar with banknotes, and the dimly lit taverns in which so many were passed, conspired to create a forgers' paradise. Crucially though, we must

remember that the genuine banknotes of this period were themselves fairly primitive.

Devoid of any emblem or vignette and totally lacking in colour, these early notes bore little resemblance to their modern counterparts.

Until the mid-19th century the serial numbers, signatures and often dates, too, were all filled in by hand. They were unlike in format, with the back free for scribbling ribald rhymes, political slogans and the like.

In a period of rough justice the crime of forgery carried the harshest of penalties – execution. Many paid the ultimate price. Others were lucky and had their death sentence commuted, subject to the agreement of the banks concerned.

John Currie, found guilty in 1729 of counterfeiting 20 shilling notes, was

sentenced to 'whipping. Pillory and perpetual imprisonment'.

Another, one Charles Turner, agreed to name his accomplices and confess to the whole wicked undertaking.

The early banknotes, although a model for the banks, never reached the levels of south of the border. The period 1806-1825 saw 86 prosecutions, of which eight resulted in execution. In England, however, there were more than 1,000 prosecutions and over 300 deaths.

The introduction of watermarked paper in 1723 represented a major advance in the fight against forgery. The main defence, however, lay in increasingly elaborate designs. But, as the genuine notes became more sophisticated, so too did the forgeries.

The early manual efforts and



■ Risky home industry – some of the tools of a master forger.

woodblock productions ceded to skilful counterfeits produced from engraved copper plates.

With the banks' adoption of steel printing plates in the early 19th century came much finer detail, and the incorporation of vignettes. The resulting notes were mini works of art, far beyond the ability of the average forger. The few counterfeits which did appear at this time were easily detected, due to their inferior quality.

But it was the threat posed by photography which led to the printing of banknotes in two or more colours, and the extension of designs to the back. The banks scrambled to identify the perfect combination of colour and design which would foil photographic attempts.

Bank of Scotland engaged an eminent scientist from Edinburgh University to conduct exhaustive experiments during the 1880s. The subsequent series of banknotes were deemed to be 'proof against photographic forgery'. Imagine then the uproar when forgeries appeared

just a few years later!

And so it has continued, with each spate of forgeries prompting a new issue of notes. Indeed, the whole history of banknote design has been driven by the need to keep one step ahead of the forgers. Hence metallic strips became the norm after the Second World War, and later still came fluorescent and colour-shifting inks, microprinting and holograms. The evolutionary process, sparked by Thomas McGhie some 300 years ago, has come a long way.

Then there was the case of the young artist who became a forger. Housed in the Natural History Museum in London are some 500 drawings by Thomas Watling, native of Dumfries.

Collectively, they represent the main visual record of the earliest decade of British settlement in Australia. The first professional artist to arrive at Sydney Cove, Watling spent the years 1792-1797 sketching the flora, fauna and native Aborigines.

But Watling was an unwilling pioneer and left Australia as soon as he could – on receipt of his pardon from the

Governor of the penal colony!

Previously the local art master, Watling had been convicted of forging guinea notes in his home town. Of his guilt there can be little doubt – he certainly had the necessary skill, and when a search of his lodgings turned up a half-finished note 'in imitation of the Bank Of Scotland's, things looked bleak indeed. The Crown

cited 45 witnesses against him and Watling conceded defeat. He escaped the hangman's noose by electing for transportation and, in 1789, was sentenced to 14 years in the newly-founded colony at Botany Bay.

And so it was that Thomas Watling became the first European to capture images of the Antipodes. He executed the earliest known oil painting of Sydney, a place which he described as 'the principal settlement... about one third part as large as Dumfries.'

Early scientists based their descriptions of native birds on his many drawings, and his striking portraits and written accounts of

the combined powers of a good letterer and the qualifications of a picture engraver.'

Suspicion fell on an international gang operating from Belgium, particularly as the paper used was of an inferior quality, suggesting that it was made on the Continent!

By the summer of 1889 more than 50 notes had appeared. Speculation raged as to the identity of the villains, fuelled by newspaper reports and the offer of a £250 reward. The breakthrough came on July 24 when a tip-off led to the Edinburgh home of John Hamilton Mitchell, 'general artist and engraver'. Amongst the



■ Bank of Scotland forgery plates that fell into the right hands.

Aborigines bear poignant testimony to a people and culture largely destroyed by the newcomers.

Talented Watling might have been smart, but smart he wasn't. In a classic case of recidivism, he wasted little time in putting his talents to more dubious purposes.

Within two years of his return to Dumfries, Watling was again charged with forgery, this time for Bank of Scotland £5 notes. However, despite numerous prosecution witnesses and compelling evidence against him, the jury found the charge not proven and Watling walked free.

In November, 1888, Bank of Scotland's 'forgery-proof' £1 notes were successfully copied and circulated. The counterfeits were of an extremely high standard, far better than 'any forgery they have ever seen at the Bank of England.'

It was immediately apparent that, instead of the anticipated photographic assault, the attack had come from a more traditional quarter.

All agreed that this was the work of more than one person since it was 'extremely rare to find in one Engraver

incriminating evidence found there were forged notes in various stages of completion, engraved copper plates, his box of colours and an artist's palette.

Mitchell was 74 at the time of his arrest, married and with three children still at home. Living in straitened circumstances since the collapse of the Caledonian Loan Co., he had succumbed to temptation and used his exceptional skills for criminal ends.

However, he claimed a second motive: the desire to prove the Bank wrong in its boasts of forgery-proof notes. Be that as it may, Mitchell was convicted at the High Court in Edinburgh and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. A footnote to the whole affair remains in the Bank's Archives: a letter from James McGall, a family friend, petitioning for a pension for Mrs Mitchell!

McGall clearly blamed the directors for luring 'that foolish old man' into criminality by 'the simplicity' of their notes. They should, he argued, be grateful that Mitchell had exposed their shortcomings 'at such a small cost to themselves'.

The Bank's response has not survived. ●



■ A fistful of forgeries? Spotting the funny money is not always easy as the notes indicate.

Ship-a-day Clydeside was top of the world



It was the roaring war years as far as shipbuilding on the River Clyde was concerned, but the boom turned to gloom with recession... along with much of Scotland's other heavy industries. But vestiges of the glory days are all around, says biker historian David Ross

The aftermath of the First World War saw the collapse of Industry in Britain. The statistics regarding tonnage of shipping launched on the Clyde before the Great War are quite remarkable. One fifth of the world's shipping bore the famous moniker 'Clyde-built' around the turn of the 20th century. 1913 saw an astonishing fact – more than one ship per day was launched on the Clyde in this vintage year.

Following the war came unrest, the General Strike, the Depression, but the Second World War saw a last sparkle before the days of the great shipyards became a distant memory. I remember the late Jack House, a great Glasgow 'expert', once state to an American audience how during the 1939-45 period, there was three times as much shipping launched on the Clyde as there was in every yard in the USA put together. He was jeered in disbelief.

The bulk of the old yards are now wasteland or modern development has crept over their sites, but there are many other seats of industry that, fortunately, have been saved for future generations to enjoy and enable us to appreciate the days of Empire and prosperity.

The Bonawe Iron Furnace stands beside Loch Etive near Taynuilt on the A85, some 24km east of Oban. It was economical in the 1700s to build this iron-smelter here because of the availability of trees to create charcoal for the furnaces. The main complex is open to visitors, and is signposted from the main road.

While in Taynuilt, the railway station is well worth a visit. It is a typical Highland example, built in 1879, with the main offices on one platform with a detached signal box, and the small wooden shelter on the other.

Trains still run through, but the station itself is a preserved example of a bygone age. While on the theme of railways, the Glenfinnan viaduct, standing across the glen behind the monument to the '45, and the subject of many calendars and postcards, is a lasting testament to industry in itself.

It was opened in 1901, part of the Fort William to Mallaig line. It has 21 spans covering a length of over a thousand feet, and the whole structure is made up of mass-concrete, an early



■ The Queen Mary, a reminder of better times, sails past Greenock in 1936.

example of what was then a new way of building.

The Lanarkshire village of Biggar, in Upper Clydesdale, still has its little gas works preserved and in the care of the Royal Museum of Scotland. These small town gas works were once familiar sights in Scotland, but this is one of the few surviving. It is signposted from the A702, running through the centre of Biggar.

Biggar has several museums all with different themes, quite extraordinary for a village of its size. Slightly further north stands New Lanark Industrial Village on the banks of the Clyde, about a mile south of Lanark itself. It is Scotland's outstanding monument to the Industrial Revolution, and a lasting memorial to the social reforms of David Dale and Robert Owen. A visit here is a day out in itself.

Coatbridge has the Summerlee Heritage Park, signposted from the surrounding motorway network. It is a museum dedicated to the former heavy industrialisation of the area and there is plenty to amuse both adults and children.

One of the major attractions is the system of trams that run on lines across the site, passing early locomotives. The tram drivers even stop to allow the kids to place pennies on the lines, so that they can be squashed like plasticine by the weight of the vehicles passing over them.

At the south end of Newtongrange on the A7 through Lothian stands the Lady Victoria Colliery, now run by the

Scottish Mining Museum Trust.

Standing over all is that famous symbol of the coalfields, the pulley wheels which raised and lowered the cages over 1,500 feet to the bases of the shafts far below. Inside the building stands the massive winding engine for the cables, built in Kilmarnock in 1894 and originally steam powered. It is now defunct, but lovingly looked after.

East of Musselburgh is the Prestongrange Beam-Engine and Brickworks, on the coast road on the southern shore of the Firth of Forth. The beam engine was constructed to drain the local mine of flood water and its very size impresses upon us the vast scale that 19th-century engineers could work on These Lothian mines, as well as the Summerlee works were once owned by the great Neilson family.

Over and above these are the ships, kept in a preserved state, which once sailed the seven seas, such as those at Dundee, where still stands the mighty railway bridge over the Tay and below, still jutting from the water, are the stumps of its fallen predecessor, a testimony to one of the great calamities of the age, the Tay Bridge disaster.

But remnants of the glory days are all around: the fine buildings in our cities, the great canals, the railways, the glass-covered stations, and the bridges – the Forth Railway Bridge springs immediately to mind as a lasting testimony to times when Scotland and fine engineering went hand in hand. ●

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SCOTLAND'S STORY

NEXT WEEK IN PART 48



FACING WAR AGAIN

Scottish casualties may have been much less than those of the Great War, but in global terms the Second World War sank into an uncharted abyss of bloodletting insanity. By the end of the conflict between 35 and 60 million were dead and a new quarrel, the 'Cold War', was born.

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